



BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

A RAND Project to Explore U.S. Strategy in a Changing World

# MEASURING THE HEALTH OF THE **Liberal International Order**

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## Preface

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In this report, we analyze the health of the existing post–World War II liberal international order and draw implications from that analysis for future U.S. policy. To evaluate the status of the existing order, we examined several categories of indicators, including both inputs (such as state participation in and attitudes toward order) and outcomes that reflect the order’s primary objectives (such as economic liberalization and interdependence, peace among great powers, and adherence to the order’s norms). Ultimately, we found that the postwar order continues to enjoy many elements of stability but is increasingly threatened by major geopolitical and domestic socioeconomic trends that are calling into question its fundamental assumptions.

This report is part of Building a Sustainable International Order, a larger RAND Corporation project that seeks to understand the existing international order, assess current challenges to the order, and recommend future U.S. policies with respect to the order. For more information on the project, visit [www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/international-order](http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/international-order).

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## Summary

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In recent years, the liberal international order that the United States has helped develop and foster since the end of World War II has been met with challenges by rising powers and populist movements around the world. In this report, we analyze the health of the existing postwar order and draw implications from that analysis for future U.S. policy. This research is part of Building a Sustainable International Order, a larger RAND Corporation project that seeks to understand the existing international order, assess current challenges to the order, and recommend future U.S. policies with respect to the order.

This project defines the *international order* as the body of rules, norms, and institutions that govern relations among the key players in the international environment. Today's order includes a complex mix of formal global institutions, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization; bilateral and regional security organizations; and liberal political norms. To evaluate the status of the existing order, we examined several categories of indicators. Our research examined both inputs (such as state participation in and attitudes toward order) and outcomes that reflect the order's primary objectives (such as economic liberalization and interdependence, peace among great powers, and adherence to the order's norms).

While it may be important to understand the order's current health, it is not easy or straightforward. The order is made up of many diverse elements. As a result, there is no single indicator that can give an accurate picture of the health of the order. Order could be waning in several areas but strengthening or holding steady in others, and its sum total effects could remain largely unchanged. Further, there is dis-

agreement about which institutions constitute the order. Given the difficulty of generating just one appropriate indicator, for this analysis, we examined a range of metrics to assess the health of the order. We took an aggregative approach, surveying evidence across many indicators and developing conclusions about the trajectory of the order. We then added a qualitative consideration of two key support systems of any order: its geopolitical and ideological foundations.

We completed this analysis at a fateful moment for the future of the post–World War II order. Elections across the Western world, including Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, have granted new influence to a set of leaders and parties highly skeptical of many aspects of that order, from trade to immigration policy to arms control. There can be little question that the order is now under significant pressure. We completed the research before the advent of the new Trump administration, and this analysis does not reflect an evaluation of the administration’s specific emerging effects on the order.

We do, however, place the debates over changing U.S. strategy and policy into a particular context—one in which the postwar order was already coming under significant pressure from a range of factors. Indeed, the one overarching finding of our research, particularly the survey of state attitudes toward and signaling about the postwar order, is that the degree of pressure for reform is accelerating faster than most observers anticipated, and the pressures on the order are now more treacherous than ever. Russia’s frustration with elements of the order, specifically Western alliances and active democracy promotion, has become intense and has led to outright conflict. India, Turkey, Brazil, and other major powers are speaking up more urgently about various issues, such as the reform of international institutions and the limits of the Western-centric, neoliberal economic model. Most profoundly, China is both steadily increasing its participation and influence in the order’s institutions—including contributing to the United Nations peacekeeping function and adding its currency to the International Monetary Fund’s Special Drawing Rights list—and making a hard-edged critique of the order’s perceived inequities.

At the same time, the degree of frustration with the costs and pressures of a globalizing order has risen significantly, especially in the

working classes of the developed world. Evidence reviewed for this analysis suggests that this has both economic and sociocultural roots: Stagnating economic prospects combine with a sense of cultures under siege to create growing resentment against a perceived out-of-control global order. This analysis concludes that the postwar order was already under significant strain before Trump was elected U.S. President. It was under pressure from above, in the form of the geopolitical challenges of a more multipolar order, and from below, in the form of populist outrage at its economic and social implications.

Yet our analysis also suggests that it would be wrong to exaggerate the degree of crisis facing many elements of the postwar order. Across numerous variables, our analysis demonstrates an impressive degree of stability—and, in many cases, steady progress—since 1945 and especially since the mid-1980s. Even today, we found important degrees of continuing viability in the order in many areas: the official position of most leading states, public opinion on such issues as international institutions and trade, the persistence of important norms of nonaggression and nonproliferation, the health of key U.S. alliances, and the existence of a value-sharing core of democracies. The postwar order is imperiled, but it retains many powerful sources of strength. Henry Kissinger recently remarked, “We are at a hinge point. The world looks dormant for the moment because in many countries, a lot of decisions have been delayed. . . . But they will accelerate and impact each other soon after [Trump’s] inauguration.”<sup>1</sup> This analysis strongly supports the sense of an encroaching period of uncertainty and potentially more-dramatic swings in the health of the order—an inflection point in the character of the international order. The overall portrait that emerges from our survey of evidence could best be described as *stable with accelerating signs of disruption*. Our aggregative survey of indicators produced the following seven broad judgments on the health of the order:

1. *Until recently, measurable indicators of the rule-based order remained broadly stable and did not show evidence of a rapid*

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Jeffrey Goldberg, “World Chaos and World Order: Conversations with Henry Kissinger,” *Atlantic*, November 10, 2016.

*decline.* Recent analyses have warned of a precipitous decline in the health of the order. In the categories we assessed for this analysis, we did not see such a trend until increasingly destabilizing actions since 2014. In virtually all cases, leading trend lines, in areas ranging from trade to institutional participation to conflict, remained on relatively stable trajectories. These measures include, among others, participation in international institutions; the effectiveness of tools, such as the World Trade Organization dispute resolution mechanism; and public opinion on such issues as the United Nations and immigration. As just one example, the total number of United Nations Security Council meetings, the number of resolutions taken up, and the number of resolutions passed have remained steady since about 2005. In 2014, the Security Council held the largest number of meetings since 2006, and it has steadily approved between 95 percent and 98 percent of its resolutions for a decade.

2. *However, developments since 2014—including Russian aggression in Ukraine, the Brexit vote, the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and the continued influence of far-right parties in Europe—suggest that the order could be in much more peril than the data through 2014 would suggest. A growing, global populist rebellion against economic and political integration and the spread of a homogenizing cosmopolitan ethic is beginning to have very dangerous implications for the order.* This movement includes largely right-wing populist movements throughout Europe, advocates of various flavors of state capitalism in China and Russia, and the conservative/populist wave that brought Trump to the presidency in the United States. The movement's future remains uncertain; it is a wave that could break without gaining additional force, or it could presage more-radical reactions to come. This reaction has arguably become more intense where the integration and rule-making have been most advanced, as in Europe. These events give us reason to worry that the short-term fluctuation in several issue areas since 2010 could represent the beginning of destabilizing long-term trends rather than temporary variation.



3. *To the extent that interconnections are apparent from the data, economic variables stand out as the most load-bearing elements of the order.* Measures of economic growth, trade, investment, and integrated capital markets are connected in some way or other with just about every other variable. In many ways, the foundational promise of the order is economic prosperity. If public and governmental audiences perceive that the order can no longer make this promise, support for its rules, norms, and institutions could be fatally weakened, partly because so many other variables are affected by economic ones.
4. *The data suggest specific ways in which the rule-based order has had practical effects to benefit U.S. interests.* The most persuasive empirical research, for example, suggests that global trade institutions and rules have both spurred additional trade and reduced trade volatility. Economic institutions, and the underlying norms they promoted, proved critical in managing the effects of the 2008 financial crisis. States continue to rely on treaties of pacific settlement to reduce the incidence of conflict.
5. *Beyond the general ideological reaction to the order, the data raise worrying new trends, including evidence that key trends in the order may have begun to turn in negative directions in 2013 or 2014. In at least two important areas—trade integration and levels of conflict—long-term positive trends are showing increasing strain.* After a short recovery after the 2008 financial crisis, trade integration has stalled in the past several years. Levels of interstate conflict have shown a slight spike since 2014. As the McKinsey Global Institute has indicated, global flows of goods, finances, and services are down more than 14 percent from their peak in 2007 and, after a brief post-2008 burst, have stagnated.<sup>2</sup> It is too early to tell whether these reversals are fleeting divergences from the norm—they so far remain within historical fluctuations—or are the signs of more-negative trends to come. Our analysis does point to reasons for concern that we are witnessing the

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<sup>2</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, *Digital Globalization: The New Era of Global Flows*, McKinsey and Co., March 2016.

beginning of a long-term destabilization. Fundamentally, however, it is simply too early to tell.

The negative indicators are well within the scale of prior variation, at least for the time being. The most we can say at this point is that these trends demand both close watching and policy responses designed to keep them from worsening.

6. *There is evidence in the data to support a claim of liberal overreach.* The order is in the most danger in areas where it has been pushed to the far edges of plausibility. In such areas as liberal interventionism, the reach and extent of European Union bureaucracy, and the speed of global trade integration, the data suggest that overly ambitious efforts to advance liberal elements of the order could be destabilizing. We may be reaching the natural limits of key elements of the liberal order—namely, the further liberalization of trade and the active promotion of democratic systems.
7. *Two powerful qualitative trends—shifting geopolitical balances of power and the emergence of a worldwide antiglobalization narrative—may pose a substantial, indeed historic, threat to a shared international order.* Our research into historical antecedents of the current order suggest that orders rely crucially on supportive geopolitical balances and some degree of ideological agreement among the main sponsoring powers. It is when these foundations begin to crumble that the superstructure of rules, norms, and institutions collapses as well. There are reasons for very significant concern that ongoing trends are imperiling the stability of the order in a slow-motion fashion that may not have shown up yet in many of the other measures we survey in this analysis. Our analysis strongly suggests that the order is robust enough to sustain some negative impacts, but if negative trends were to accelerate in all three sources of equilibrium—economic indicators, U.S. leadership, and governing systems (via the rise of authoritarian populism)—at the same time, the order could sustain fatal damage.

The sum total of these seven broad findings does not support clear-cut interpretations of the health of the order. Many essential

foundations appear to remain strong, including global interdependence and the signaling of other major powers, which have repeatedly made clear their desire for a rule-based international system—just not one in which the United States writes those rules and then is perceived to ignore them at will while enforcing them on others. On the other hand, the broad and deep set of international organizations, both official and private, remains quite robust, as does the sense of shared fate on such issues as counterterrorism.

However, the global populist upsurge is placing the popular consensus on key elements of the order in jeopardy. These elements include the desirability of open markets and open borders, the value of multilateral solutions, and the very notion of the rule of law. The foundational assumptions of the postwar order were always more tightly connected to the parallel process of globalization than typically appreciated. Now that connection is challenging the sustainability of the order by transferring resentment against the costs and pressures of globalization to the overarching order.

Translating these variables into broader conclusions about the order's prospects, and the steps that would most effectively support it, inevitably involves a subjective judgment. To derive a comprehensive picture from the order's disparate components, we could not merely add the results from different variables. There is no single, defining factor that can be relied on for a default verdict on the order's health. Nor is there any meaningful algorithm or other way of summing up different variables into a single larger result.<sup>3</sup> As a result, our eventual findings reflect the application of informed judgment about the order—under the influence of the project's multiple lines of research, including the historical basis for orders and the detailed views and behavior of major powers—to the specific categories of variables.

We believe that this review of the evidence supports several subsidiary, policy-relevant judgments. The most fundamental is that the operation of the postwar liberal international order will have to undergo

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<sup>3</sup> We experimented with such quantitative functions, trying to determine whether a single set of linked variables could produce a meaningful global indicator of the health of the order. We ultimately concluded that any such finding would be misleading.

significant revision if it is to remain viable. There are important reservoirs of strength in the existing order and areas in which it offers clear coordination benefits to leading states. But the pressures of geopolitical and ideological objections to the order demand a significant alteration of the U.S. role. There is suggestive but not conclusive evidence in the data to suggest that the order must become more fully shared—and be made more legitimate in the eyes of other great powers—if it is to survive. We offer the following conclusions and implications for U.S. national security and foreign policy in the years ahead:

1. *The postwar order is at a perilous moment, and U.S. support and engagement over the coming decade will be essential.* Given the multiple signs of stress already in place, were the United States to withdraw its support for alliances, end contributions to international institutions, and abandon free-trade accords, the result could be fatal damage to any concept of a meaningful international order. In particular, *the U.S. alliance structure has been a centerpiece of the order for 70 years*, helping to maintain stability in key regions and serving as the most significant symbol of a continuing U.S. commitment to international security. It is no time to conduct large-scale experiments in U.S. global retrenchment; there are enough worrisome short-term signals that it would be a very inopportune time to call into question another major source of equilibrium—notably, the effective leadership of the order's major sponsor. The elements of the order contributing to the decline of conflict include U.S. leadership and alliance structures. Especially with challenges to the order on the rise, there is strong reason to believe that significant retrenchment would create notable instabilities.
2. *Maintaining the stability of global economic markets, institutions, and rules is the indispensable foundation for sustaining the order.* This component of the order is more load-bearing than any other. If global trading networks were to collapse into beggar-thy-neighbor protectionism (that is, when a state enacts economic policies that benefit it but worsen the economic problems of other countries), or even increasingly exclusive regional trad-

ing blocs, the effects on a shared global order would be devastating. The challenge is that this conclusion does not necessarily demand urgent passage of the two major regional trade agreements (Trans-Pacific Partnership and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) now on the table. It could be that sustaining current trade agreements, avoiding new rounds of protectionism, and working on issues of trade impacts (through social support programs) and financial stability agreements would be more supportive of the order in the long term.

3. *The strategy for sustaining the economic elements of a shared order must be rethought.* While support for the general benefits of trade remains strong both in the United States and globally, rising skepticism, stalled large-scale trade deals, and evidence of growing inequality in key countries point to the need for a new sort of order-based trade agenda. The goal should be to enhance societies' standards of living and find ways to support vulnerable populations in a globalizing economy. Developments in public opinion, national signaling, and the ideological foundations of the order all point to the fairly urgent need to address its perceived socioeconomic costs and restore the faith that major elements of the order enhance prosperity. If the order cannot grow measurably deeper (in such areas as trade, political integration, and military cooperation), the United States should lead an effort to shore up the existing order against backsliding sparked by social and political grievances.
4. *The tone and character of U.S. leadership will have to change to sustain the current order.* The undeniable multipolarity of the emerging system, as well as the high sensitivity of populist and nationalist great powers, means that traditional U.S. approaches to diplomacy in an era of U.S. preeminence must give way to approaches that are more nuanced and patient. This does not mean the United States should step back from decisive leadership but rather that it should exercise that leadership in ways that are less directive and domineering.
5. *The United States must develop concepts for a more shared and seemingly equitable order.* Areas of vulnerability in the order

include both rising challenges to its rules and principles and growing resentments on the part of major powers, whose leaders argue that the order is inherently biased against their states. Dealing with both at the same time will demand a very challenging balancing act in which U.S. policy preserves a careful attention to norms while finding avenues of accommodation to enhance the legitimacy of the order in the eyes of other leading powers.

If this analysis is correct, preserving the stabilizing and cooperation-inducing effects of the postwar order requires more than business as usual. It demands a different approach from simply reaffirming the values that have inspired the order and making renewed threats about the U.S. willingness to enforce those values. The analysis would seem to point to a two-part agenda for the United States: new strategies for allaying the negative impacts and fears engendered by an integrationist era and a new vision for U.S. leadership of a more shared, and at times less intrusive, order.

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## Abbreviations

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ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
EU	European Union
FDI	foreign direct investment
G-4	Group of 4
G-7	Group of 7
G-8	Group of 8
G-20	Group of 20
GDP	gross domestic product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
Mercosur	Southern Common Market
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
U.N.	United Nations
WMD	weapons of mass destruction
WTO	World Trade Organization



## Introduction

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In recent years, the liberal international order that the United States has helped develop and foster since the end of World War II has been met with challenges by rising powers and populist movements around the world. This report aims to contribute to the growing dialogue on the future of the international order by offering a snapshot of the order's health as of the first half of 2016. This research is part of Building a Sustainable International Order, a larger RAND Corporation project that seeks to understand the existing international order, assess current challenges to the order, and recommend future U.S. policies with respect to the order.

Many recent analyses point to the rising threats to the order and argue that it has substantially weakened.<sup>1</sup> “These days,” Richard Haass argues, “the balance between order and disorder has shifted toward the latter.”<sup>2</sup> Chester Crocker warns of a “world adrift,” characterized by a wobbling international order “in a rudderless transition.”<sup>3</sup> The conventional wisdom, in fact, is that the order is rapidly fragmenting under the assault of quasi-revisionist major powers; flagging U.S. leadership;

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Harris, “Losing the International Order: Westphalia, Liberalism and Current World Crises,” *National Interest*, November 10, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Richard N. Haass, “The Unraveling: How to Respond to a Disordered World,” *Foreign Affairs*, November–December 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Chester A. Crocker, “The Strategic Dilemma of a World Adrift,” *Survival*, Vol. 57, No. 1, 2015, pp. 7–8, 13. See also the warnings in John McCain, “The Syria Ceasefire Plan Is a Sign of the Decaying World Order,” *War on the Rocks*, February 14, 2016; and Philip Bobbitt, “States of Disorder,” *New Statesman*, March 1, 2016.

and sources of instability, such as failed states and volatility in capital markets. If true, we would expect to find objective evidence of a wearying order.

These worries have emerged in the context of a deeper literature questioning the status of institutions of global governance.<sup>4</sup> These arguments gained force after the 2008 financial crisis, which caused many observers to worry that global institutions proved inadequate to the task of managing the international economy.<sup>5</sup> Ian Bremmer has worried about a “G-Zero” world in which economic leadership through such groups as the Group of 7 (G-7) or Group of 20 (G-20) collapses, destroying functional or coherent leadership of the global economy.<sup>6</sup>

To assess the future of the order, it is important to have a clear-eyed sense of its current health. This is true because such an assessment offers a sense of not only whether the order is truly in peril but also how urgently the United States might need to take action to deal with possible threats. Our approach is to assess the health of the order in terms of the order’s assistance in achieving (or ability to achieve) U.S. foreign policy goals: preventing great-power war and competition, enhancing prosperity and global economic stability, facilitating collective action on shared challenges, and promoting liberal values. By doing so, the insights derived from an assessment of the order’s health can help inform U.S. policy priorities and design.

While it may be important to understand the order’s current status, it is not easy or straightforward. As discussed in an earlier report in this series, the order is made up of diverse elements.<sup>7</sup> As a result, there is no single indicator that can give an accurate picture of the health of

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<sup>4</sup> A leading recent argument in this score is Thomas Hale, David Held, and Kevin Young, *Gridlock: Why Global Cooperation Is Failing When We Need It Most*, London: Polity Press, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Samans, Klaus Schwab, and Mark Malloch-Brown, “Running the World, After the Crash,” *Foreign Policy*, January 3, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Bremmer, *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World*, New York: Portfolio, May 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Michael J. Mazarr, Miranda Priebe, Andrew Radin, and Astrid Stuth Cevallos, *Understanding the Current International Order*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1598-OSD, 2016.

the order. Order could be waning in several areas but strengthening or holding steady in others, and its sum total effects could remain largely unchanged. Alternatively, if one or two areas are especially critical to the order, then a single indicator running in the wrong direction could be of great concern.

Given the difficulty of generating just one appropriate indicator, we propose combining several metrics to assess the health of the order. The approach is to look at inputs (such as state participation in and attitudes toward order) and outcomes that reflect the order's primary objectives (such as economic liberalization and interdependence, peace among great powers, and adherence to the order's norms).

This analysis was largely completed before the November 2016 U.S. presidential election. We do not offer a detailed assessment of policies of the Donald Trump administration or their likely effect on the order, partly because, at the time of this writing, it is too early to be sure what campaign statements will be translated into law or how the administration will manage its engagement with specific issues. Already, it appears that several issues, such as U.S. relations with Russia and China and how they might translate into implications for elements of the order, remain in significant flux.

The report does, however, discuss two major themes related to the changing political dynamics in the United States. The report argues that the postwar order was already reaching an inflection point, under significant pressure from both above and below. From above, at the geopolitical level, the emergence of a more multipolar context—and the demands from other great powers for a more shared order—means that aspects of U.S. predominance must give way to a more complex conception of making and enforcing the rules of the order. From below, reactions in many developed countries to the economic- and globalization-related assumptions of the order, especially among working classes whose economic prospects have remained stagnant or even worsened in recent years, call into question the order's ideological foundations. In this sense, this analysis was already trying to come to grips with the larger phenomenon that the current U.S. administration exemplifies.

## The Order and Its Health

This project defines the *international order* as the body of rules, norms, and institutions that govern relations among the key players in the international environment. Order has taken many forms throughout history. In the 19th century, for example, the Concert of Europe system included general agreements and informal processes for managing relations among the great powers.<sup>8</sup> Today's order includes a complex mix of formal global institutions, such as the United Nations (U.N.) and World Trade Organization (WTO); bilateral and regional security organizations; and liberal political norms.

The concept of *order* has various meanings depending on the context.<sup>9</sup> International order can be distinguished from the broader concept of an international *system*, which reflects dozens of realities and trends: the balance of power among leading states, the degree and equity of development, levels of globalization or interdependence, levels of resource availability, and much more. The system is the comprehensive global context in which states operate. *Order*, on the other hand, refers to organized configurations within the international system. G. John Ikenberry defines an order as a set of “governing arrangements between states, including its fundamental rules, principles, and institutions.”<sup>10</sup>

In this most basic sense, order is merely a settled pattern of relationships and behaviors among actors in a system. It does not presume intentionality or coherence. Nor does it presume that order will necessarily promote stability, or peace. Arguably, the most essential and traditional form of order in history has been a balance of power: States, as the dominant actors, have sought power and security, and overwhelming power (or intense threat) tends to get balanced. When it works

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<sup>8</sup> For more on the Concert of Europe and its implications for the current order, see Kyle Lascurettes, *The Concert of Europe and Great-Power Governance Today: What Can the Order of 19th-Century Europe Teach Policymakers About International Order in the 21st Century?* Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, PE-226-OSD, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed discussion of the definition of the postwar order, see Mazarr et al., 2016, Chapter Two.

<sup>10</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 23.

well, a balance-of-power order is certainly better than chaos and can help prevent both war and oppression by a dominant state.

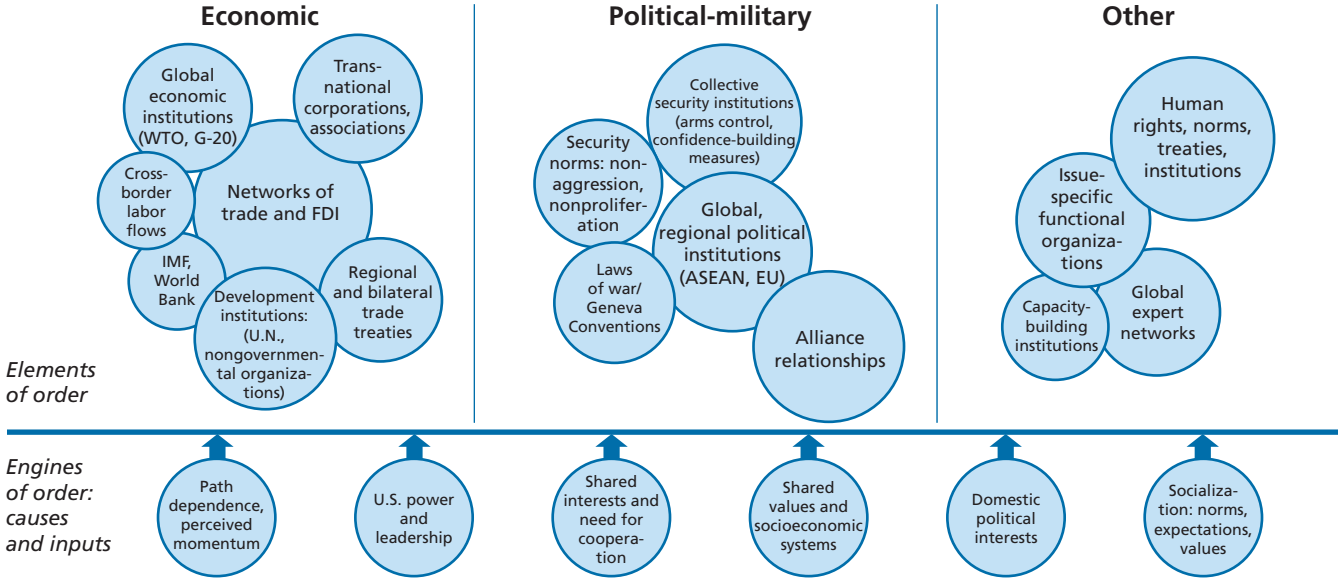
In this context, the postwar liberal international order has comprised several elements, each mutually reinforcing. These have included U.S. power and sponsorship; legitimate global institutions, including the U.N., the WTO, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but also many issue-specific organizations in such areas as air traffic control, electronic standards, and accounting; regional political institutions, such as the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); international legal conventions, from arms control regimes to the law of war, that constrain the actions of states; and an emerging set of inchoate but often powerful shared norms. We tend to equate this version of order with the concept more generally, but it is only one potential variety.<sup>11</sup> Figure 1.1 attempts to capture the operative elements of the liberal order, as well as the primary engines or motivating forces behind it. As seen in the figure, elements include relationships, patterns, networks, norms, values and beliefs, institutions, organizations, and treaties. The liberal elements of the order exist across all three components: economic, political-military, and other.

Within this general framework, the postwar liberal order has been grounded most powerfully on two broad architectures. The first is the trade regime that contributed to the liberalization of global economies and linked the world community together in expanding and deepening networks of interdependence. The second dominant component of the order is in the security realm, built on the U.N. Charter and its basic principles of territorial nonaggression. The security order sought to obstruct large-scale aggression, as well as to “shape the use of force: limiting it, so as not to trigger unnecessary conflict, but also enabling

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<sup>11</sup> Ikenberry has defined the postwar order as a combination of “Economic openness, reciprocity, [and] multilateral management,” which he referred to as the “organizing arrangements of a distinctly liberal Western order” which reflected larger ambitions than merely countering Soviet power (G. John Ikenberry, “Liberal Hegemony and the Future of American Postwar Order,” in T. V. Paul and John Hall, eds., *International Order and the Future of World Politics*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 124).

**Figure 1.1**  
**Snapshot of the Elements and Engines of the Liberal International Order**



NOTE: FDI = foreign direct investment.

RAND RR1994-1.1



it to prevent unchecked aggression or abuse,” thus “minimizing the use of force as a tool for managing inter-state relations.”<sup>12</sup>

By the first years of the 21st century, then, the postwar order had evolved to a position of significant institutional and normative strength. It had become the basic architecture for international politics, and its norms were gathering growing adherence around the world.

The postwar order has come to be expressed in specific rules, norms, and institutions, which can provide the basis for an evaluative analysis. Table 1.1 defines these essential elements of the postwar order as we evaluate them in this analysis. Building on the categories and types of institutions outlined in Figure 1.1, this table lists many of the specific institutions that compose the order. As the list suggests, the order represents a mutually reinforcing combination of rules, norms, and institutions, many of them overlapping. This list is not exhaustive but specifies the key elements of the order we sought to assess. Next, we define several indicators of order that flow directly from these elements.

These categories furnish the elements that we will evaluate in assessing the health of the order. We examine the health of several of these institutions and their constituent mechanisms; we assess trends related to the norms reflected on this list, in such areas as conflict and human rights; and we examine the positions taken by major powers on these issues and the broader concept of the order.

More specifically, each of the four categories in Table 1.1 is reflected in specific variables we assess. We evaluate the health of the baseline institutions of the order through such criteria as membership patterns, evidence of effective operation, contributions to specific initiatives (such as peacekeeping and development assistance), and the working of specific mechanisms (such as the U.N. Security Council). We evaluate economic institutions and norms through both institutional effectiveness (in the WTO, regional trade institutions, the IMF, and more) and desired outcomes of those processes, such as trade integration. We evaluate security institutions in similar ways—using evidence

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<sup>12</sup> Bruce Jones, Thomas Wright, Jeremy Shapiro, and Robert Keane, *The State of the International Order*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, Policy Paper No. 33, February 25, 2014, p. 4.

**Table 1.1**  
**Elements of the Liberal International Order**

Baseline global institutions and norms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The U.N. system</li><li>• Semiformal global associations (e.g., G-7, G-20, Group of 77, association of BRICS nations [Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa])</li><li>• The norm (and legal and institutional principle) of territorial sovereignty</li></ul>
Economic institutions and norms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fundamental neoliberal economic norm of liberalizing systems and free trade</li><li>• General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, WTO trade treaties, and associated legal and regulatory systems and dispute-resolution mechanisms</li><li>• Regional trade institutions (e.g., EU, North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA], Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Southern Common Market [Mercosur])</li><li>• Global and regional development banks and programs (e.g., World Bank, Asian Development Bank, U.N. Development Programme, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, U.N. Economic Commissions for various regions)</li><li>• IMF</li><li>• Bank of International Settlements and associated central bank monetary coordination</li><li>• Other intergovernmental and informal international organizations dedicated to economic development, stabilization, and trade</li></ul>
Security institutions and norms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fundamental security norm of nonaggression as reflected in the U.N. Charter and multiple regional institutional charters</li><li>• U.S. treaty alliances, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and bilateral alliances with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand</li><li>• U.S. security partnerships</li><li>• International law of armed conflict and related legal standards and norms</li><li>• Regional security institutions (EU, ASEAN Regional Forum, African Union)</li><li>• Arms control and nonproliferation treaties and organizations</li><li>• Multilateral and bilateral treaties of pacific settlement (i.e., peace treaties and similar instruments), transparency, and confidence-building</li><li>• Other intergovernmental and informal international organizations dedicated to transparency, addressing specific security problems, arms reduction, peacebuilding, and other security issues (e.g., U.N. Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Conference on Disarmament, Missile Technology Control Regime, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Nuclear Suppliers Group, Proliferation Security Initiative)</li></ul>

**Table 1.1—Continued**

Institutions devoted to liberal values and collective goods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The postwar legal and normative framework, including conventions and treaties, for human rights (International Criminal Court, European Court of Justice, Interpol)</li> <li>• The postwar legal and normative framework, including conventions and treaties, for the environment</li> <li>• Organizations for coordinating policy and providing services for health and welfare (e.g., World Health Organization, World Food Program)</li> <li>• Organizations for coordinating policy in specific functional areas (e.g., International Telecommunications Union; various fishery organizations; Universal Postal Union; International Labour Organization; U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization; U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Maritime Organization)</li> </ul>

on the status of key security institutions (from the U.N. Security Council to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [NPT]); the use of peace treaties; and measures of desired outcomes, such as levels of interstate aggression. Finally, we evaluate the fourth category, institutions devoted to liberal values and collective goods, by assessing the status of key human rights institutions, global indexes of democracy, and ratings on corruption and the rule of law. In a more global sense, we evaluate the health of the order through the positions taken by leading states and on the basis of public opinion toward key institutions and norms of the order.

As we argue in Chapter Eight, the health of the order is not merely the sum of the status of these rules, norms, and institutions. International orders do not create underlying patterns of geopolitical power balances or global ideologies—they reflect them. Therefore, the health of any order will, in part, be a product of foundational trends in geopolitics and political ideology, trends that are distinct from the measurements of the elements of an order. Therefore, we also assess the status of these foundational trends in Chapter Eight.

In spite of the growing power of other states, the United States will remain a powerful country at the center of order for the foreseeable future. U.S. foreign policy choices, therefore, can be aimed at shaping the future order, not just operating within the one that exists today. Given the changing international environment described earlier,

the U.S. policy toward order may need to adapt as conditions change. Indicators of the order's health can help U.S. policymakers assess the effectiveness of U.S. policies and learn when adjustments are needed to better achieve U.S. aims.

In general terms, U.S. policymakers need to know the answers to two questions: (1) Are U.S. policies leading to the *international order*—the array of international institutions and norms, participation rates, and voting patterns—that the United States hopes to achieve? (2) Is the order ultimately achieving the *international outcomes* that the United States is seeking?<sup>13</sup>

Although the basic logic could be applied to other actors or at different points in time, the specific indicators of the order's health are context-dependent. For the indicators to inform the policymaking process, they need to be linked to U.S. goals and strategy. Since the end of World War II, the United States has seen order as a way to prevent great-power war and competition, enhance prosperity and global economic stability, facilitate collective action on shared challenges, and promote liberal values. However, the order the United States has sought to create to achieve these goals has varied with time. For example, during the early Cold War, the United States saw deep economic and security cooperation with its Western allies and a minimal global order as the most realistic way to avoid war with the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States sought to expand Western institutions to build a more institutionalized and integrated global order. Given the shift in strategy, the military strength of the Western alliance may have become a less important indicator of inter-

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<sup>13</sup> At the core of a postwar order lies the concept of *international institutions*, yet that term is not well defined; see John Duffield, "What Are International Institutions?" *International Studies Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2007. For the purposes of this analysis, we conceive of institutions as a combination of formal organizations and formal or informal rules that govern international behavior. This definition includes some broad and abstract concepts at the heart of world politics, such as sovereignty, provided that they are generally taken for granted, that their meanings are clear and shared, that they thus have the effect of indirect rules, and that they are embedded in the founding documents or treaties of major international organizations, such as the U.N.

national order outputs, while the rate of participation in global institutions may have been more important.<sup>14</sup>

## Challenges with Measurement

As discussed later in this chapter, we use six metrics (we call them *indexes*) to proxy the health of the order from the perspective of U.S. interests. However, the decision of which indicators to choose, and what can be learned from them with respect to the health of the order, is far from straightforward. Recognizing these difficulties, we outline some of the key challenges and potential pitfalls.

The first challenge of measuring the health of the order is that it is difficult to predict which factors may ultimately stabilize or destabilize a given international order.<sup>15</sup> A similar effort to measure the health of the order in 1913 or the mid-1930s, for example, might have generated international order output indicators that did little to predict the coming collapse of order. Just before World War I, the coordinating institutions of the European balance of power might have appeared stable, and the ideological affinity of most European monarchies remained in place. Similarly, in the 1930s, the institutions of the League of Nations continued functioning until the brink of global war.<sup>16</sup> In each case, someone measuring only institutional inputs might have expected a peaceful international outcome. However, in both cases, the measurable or qualitative factor that would have allowed leaders to understand how badly the order was fraying would not be clear until years later. In those cases, the order's collapse was linked to global economic depression, which contributed to the rise of fascist dictatorships in increas-

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<sup>14</sup> Ideally, the United States wanted a more integrated global order that included the Soviets after World War II, but U.S. policymakers came to accept that in the short term, the Cold War competition made this unrealistic (Mazarr et al., 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Drezner captures the difficulty in assessing “what it means for [a] system to work” in Daniel W. Drezner, *The System Worked: How the World Stopped Another Great Depression*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 19–20.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

ingly powerful states (such as Germany), whose interests could not be accommodated within the existing order.

A second and related challenge is that it can be difficult to separate expected and normal variation in the order from the first stirrings of major long-term discontinuities. Two major examples that emerge from our research are the negative trends in both democratization and trade integration. These could reflect temporary aberrations or the beginning of serious negative movement in both areas. As we argue in subsequent chapters, our essential response to this challenge is two-fold: First, we clearly recognize the problem and that it is too early to tell whether such trends represent normal variation or something more worrisome; but, second, we outline the factors that we believe provide some clues about which is the more accurate interpretation today.

The difficulty of distinguishing normal deviation from the beginning of a sharp discontinuity is part of a larger issue—understanding the baseline from which an order is being measured. This can be partly conceived in historical terms: Are we measuring the health of the current order against the apex of the Concert of Europe or the League of Nations—and in what specific categories, given the significant structural differences between those orders? Another approach would be to baseline the order's current status—over, for example, the past five to ten years—against both earlier periods during the Cold War and the immediate post-Cold War period.

Because orders among distinct historical periods are so different, we concluded that it would be difficult and perhaps misleading to baseline the current order against its distant predecessors. Although we did not choose specific moments as baseline comparisons, in broad terms, we are comparing the current state of the order since roughly 2005 against two earlier periods: the Cold War order (1945–1989) and the post-Cold War order (1989–2005). We have sought data across this history to inform a judgment about the general trajectory of the order relative to these previous periods.

A third challenge is that international order input indicators may sometimes be in tension, allowing the same action by a state to be recorded as either supporting or undermining the order. For example, if two input indicators were the number of new institutions and the

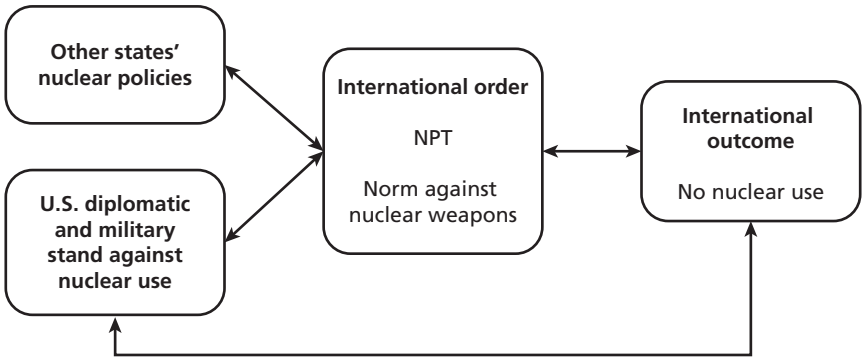
support for existing institutions, it is difficult to assess whether China's effort to build an alternative investment bank in Asia is, on net, negative or positive for the order. Similarly, U.S. actions in Iraq, Libya, and Syria are viewed by many as a violation of the nonaggression norm but were undertaken by the United States to defend other norms of the order, including liberal ones and nonproliferation.

The fourth challenge is separating the inputs from the outcomes they produce. Because there are so many variables affecting each of the potential goals, it is difficult to determine the causal effect of ordering mechanisms in achieving each of them. For example, one goal of the order is to reduce conflict by creating mechanisms for dispute resolution, generating norms against aggression, and altering preferences by integrating states into mutually dependent networks of trade and information. The level and intensity of conflict constitutes one indicator of the health of the order. But, of course, it is possible that U.S. military deterrent capabilities, rather than the dispute resolution processes or nonaggression norms, actually prevented conflict. In another example, it is difficult to separate the effect of each of the order's institutions, norms, and rules about weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—including the Biological Weapons Convention and the NPT—on global WMD outcomes (see Figure 1.2).

The challenges of inputs and outputs, of cause and effect, are further complicated by the very nature of international order. Our research in this study has confirmed the idea that the elements of order—particularly rules, norms, and institutions—*reflect* underlying power dynamics and value systems. Orders do not produce state preferences and behavior on their own. The postwar order has reflected converging interests in a globalizing world; it has not brought those interests into being. Measuring the health of any order therefore demands understanding the strength of the factors on which it rests, in addition to the seeming health of the component parts of the order. This accounts, in part, for the range of factors we have included in our analytical framework, which try to assess the context for both the order and its elements.

The final challenge is determining whether quantitative indicators can provide a sufficient explanation of the order's health. Many

**Figure 1.2**  
**Complexity of Separating the Effects of Order**



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contend that certain salient events, such as Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea, can have significant implications for the order. In this view, a single state action, rather than a long-term or average trend, could end up having an outsized impact on the future of the order by degrading its underlying norm of sovereignty. The historical cases we have begun to survey for this study strongly suggest that orders can crumble under the assault of a set of complex, interrelated, but largely idiosyncratic variables that are ambiguous and inherently qualitative.

## Methodology

Given these complexities, it becomes very difficult to assemble a truly objective scorecard either to rate the health of the order at any one time or to judge the general strategic posture or individual policies of a particular state. There is no single indicator, or closely related set of them, that will provide an objective portrait. We have addressed this challenge in three ways.

First, *in this analysis, we measure the health of the order in terms of both its institutional inputs and its intended international outcomes.* For example, we have chosen to consider indicators of both inputs to the



order (such as participation rates in international institutions) and outcomes of the order (such as levels of trade). As noted earlier, outcomes will be the product of factors that may not be captured completely by our conception of the order. Trade could rise or fall, and conflict could wax and wane, even if the health of the rules, norms, and institutions of the order remain largely stable. We do not try to attribute cause and effect. Instead, the approach here is to take the first step of determining whether indicators of institutional inputs and outcomes are pointing in the same direction.

Second, as a result, *our essential approach has been to develop what might be termed an aggregative picture of the health of the order*. Given that no single metric can give the necessary picture, we have looked across a wide range of indicators. In each case, we explain why each metric appears to be appropriate as an indicator of order, as well as the limitations and risks of using each one. The assumption of this approach is that, if a large number of such imperfect but useful indicators show roughly the same trend, the results will tell us something about the order. This approach also allows us to consider variations in the health of different parts of the order.

Third, *while we have searched for as many objective variables as we could find, we assume that qualitative indicators are as important as quantitative ones*. We do not assume that data will provide the ultimate answer. Historical accounts are as important as any measurable indicator in providing a sense of the health of an order. Orders are upheld as much by ephemeral aspects, such as perceptions and beliefs, as by any quantifiable foundations, and these factors can shift for ambiguous and unpredictable reasons. We have tried to capture these qualitative and anecdotal examples in the assessment that follows. For example, this report offers an assessment of several leading states' broad perspectives on and behavior toward the order—such as Brazil's behavior toward the foreign aid regime and China's participation in the WTO. These estimates are based on two primary sources of evidence: research in existing empirical and case-study treatments of the behavior of states toward the order and conversations with U.S. officials who work in international organizations. The results, while grounded in

facts and empirical evidence, unavoidably include a significant degree of judgment.<sup>17</sup>

Fourth, *we recognized that short-term variation can be temporary and may not point to long-term trends*. Any portrait of the health of the order must reflect its ability to withstand variation over time. The order has weathered numerous violations of rules and norms and has gone through periods of greater and lesser geopolitical and ideological ferment, even within the West. We made an effort to distinguish evidence that could reflect a momentary variation from signs of long-term decay.

Guided by these challenges, and seeking to highlight indicators of greatest importance to U.S. goals for the order, we surveyed evidence of the order's health in six areas.<sup>18</sup> These indexes stem directly from the elements of order outlined in Table 1.1, and subsequent chapters reflect the application of these indexes to those elements.

1. *Participation in formal international institutions*. The international order contains a range of formal institutions, some of which are more closely associated with the order (that is, core institutions) and others that may be perceived as more peripheral.<sup>19</sup> One basic gauge of the health of the order is the level and depth of participation in these institutions. While participation

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<sup>17</sup> There is no significant existing literature that has attempted to measure the status of the liberal international order writ large. Several recent essays (e.g., Harris, 2015; Haas, 2014; and Crocker, 2015) have made suggestive estimates pointing at individual factors, but these amount to subjective judgments. More-rigorous empirical work has been done on specific components of the order—such as the role of the WTO in encouraging trade. There is no existing body of work with well-developed methodologies for measuring the order as a whole.

<sup>18</sup> This framework reflects facts that emerged during our survey of theoretical and empirical research on elements of the order. We developed the framework in consultation with study group members and through deliberation in small meetings and project workshops.

<sup>19</sup> *Core institutions* are those that are perceived by the leading state to be most central to the current order, hence including the U.N. Security Council, World Bank, IMF, WTO, and major regional organizations (EU and NATO). *Peripheral institutions* may be newly created or less prominent international or regional organizations, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or smaller functioning organizations within the U.N. (e.g., the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

mostly consists of official state actions to participate in institutions, it can embrace some degree of unofficial activity, such as the efforts of nongovernmental organizations in quasi-formal institutions. Participation also includes support for new global rules, norms, and institutions in areas of emerging strategic importance, including cybersecurity, nonproliferation, WMD control, counterterrorism, and climate change. If the order is to remain healthy, it must evolve to meet the challenges of international politics. New norms and institutions must arise to deal with fresh dangers and opportunities.

2. *Degree of participation in economic liberalization and interdependence.* The order aims to facilitate international trade by reducing transaction costs and other barriers. Trade and financial flows, as well as analysis of the liberal character of economic policies, may lend some insight into how effective the institutions of the order have been in promoting this goal.
3. *Respect for the order's core norms of sovereignty and peaceful settlement of disputes.* The current order depends on respect for sovereignty and the basic decisionmaking procedures of the postwar order, especially with regard to violent conflict. This report examines several indicators that imply respect for these core norms, including overall incidence of interstate conflict, the number of treaties of pacific settlement, and specific aggressive acts in violation of the U.N. Charter.
4. *Adherence to liberal procedures and norms.* The postwar, U.S.-led order is distinguished, in part, by its liberal character. This category considers the development of liberal characteristics beyond open markets, including respect for democratic processes, human rights, and the rule of law.
5. *Elite political and strategic signaling about the legitimacy of the order.* This index is not merely about perceptions; it is about the formal, official stances that governments take toward the order and the resulting signaling and narratives that they broadcast. Such official positions and public statements of states can play an important role in shaping expectations about the unfolding order. If most major powers are consistently embracing the

current order and indicating that it remains important to their interests, this will help to sustain it. If they are constantly broadcasting negative messages to their populations and the world, this suggests an effort to undermine support for the order.

6. *Public attitudes toward elements of the order*, including underlying processes, institutions, and norms. Public opinion can ebb and flow independently of state policies, but it sets the context for those policies and creates boundaries above and below which states may have difficulty acting. If public opinion were to turn significantly against the order, this would be a serious challenge. These attitudes can be expressed toward regional organizations, such as NAFTA and the EU, as well as toward global institutions (such as the U.N.) and norms (such as human rights).

These six broad categories and their underlying indicators reflect a range of units of analysis. In most cases, the units are states, measured in terms of either actions or behavior. In some cases, the unit of analysis is more properly conceived of as the society, as in trade liberalization, which reflects both conscious state policies and the actions of nonstate entities, such as corporations. In other cases, the unit of analysis is a population (as in public opinion polling), and in a few cases, as with expressed views on the order, the unit is individual leaders. These various units of analysis add up to the aggregate effect we discussed earlier.

Within each of these categories, we identify specific measures (or indicators) of the strength of the elements of the postwar order outlined in Table 1.1.<sup>20</sup> Our choices of the 18 discrete indicators for the six indexes were derived from our research into the theoretical and empirical foundations of order and shaped by three fundamental considerations. First, we sought a group of measures in each of the six categories that would provide a comprehensive snapshot of that area, even when other variables are involved. Second, we looked for measurements that

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<sup>20</sup> This framework was developed on the basis of research into the mechanisms of order. It was socialized with members of the core study group of the project and assessed for completeness.

are commonly defined as leading components of the order—variables that, in the literature and discussions of the postwar order, are commonly held up as core components. Finally, we looked for variables that have reliable data. Table 1.2 outlines all 18 indicators, by index, and the justification for each.

This set of indicators represents a combination of foundations of order, institutional and rule measurements, and potential outcomes (in cases where a causal relationship has been indicated in the empirical literature). We solicited feedback on this list from study group members and discussed it in detail at the second major project workshop to assess its completeness and utility. It contains some gaps—there are no objective measures for the day-to-day functioning of many key institutions, for example. As noted earlier, some of the outcome measurements depend on many variables besides the rules, norms, and institutions of the order. Nonetheless, we believe that these measurements, taken together, can give some meaningful sense of the health of the order.

Table 1.3 offers a snapshot of the report's essential conclusions about the status of each indicator. In this scheme, green refers to indicators that are either *stable or improving*; a broad stability is the basic standard for healthy indicators. Yellow refers to indicators that are *showing reason for concern*, either already demonstrating measurable declines or showing evidence that they are likely to begin weakening soon. Orange refers to indicators that are *significantly threatened*, showing both measurable declines and underlying reasons to expect a further regression. (In theory, an indicator labeled with red would have been essentially defunct, but none has progressed—or, frankly, come close—to that point.) Gray refers to indicators whose status is unclear. The bottom-line message of this snapshot is clear enough: Across the 18 indicators we examined, the international order retains many sources of strength, but there are significant and growing areas of danger.

**Table 1.2**  
**Chosen Indicators for Measuring the International Order and the Rationale for Each, by Index**

Index of Order	Indicator	Rationale
Participation in formal international institutions	Membership in institutions, regimes	Measures institutional reach and state preferences
	Membership in alliances	Demonstrates commitment to shared security institutions
	U.N. Security Council resolution and veto trends	Measures the effective operation of the leading institution of the order
	WMD norms, institutions	Measures constraining mechanisms, which are commonly viewed as success stories of institutional order
	Support for new norms and institutions on emerging issues	Measures the ability of order to encompass rising challenges
Degree of participation in economic liberalization and interdependence	Trade, capital markets, FDI	Demonstrates shared interest in economic exchange on which order builds; may demonstrate effects of institutions; outcome measure
	Development assistance	Demonstrates shared interests in development, shows coordinating effect of institutions
	Peacekeeping contributions	Used as a signal of desire to participate in the order; reflects shared interests in controlling conflict

Table 1.2—Continued

Index of Order	Indicator	Rationale
Respect for the order’s core norms of sovereignty and peaceful settlement of disputes	Treaties of pacific settlement	Measures an institutional means of constraining conflict and a legal element of order
	Territorial changes resulting from conflict	Measures order outcomes—degree of conflict
	Levels of conflict	Measures order outcomes—degree of conflict
	Aggression without U.N. Security Council approval	Highlights the role of the order’s institutions in identifying just wars
Adherence to liberal procedures and norms	Global indexes of democracy	Measures both foundation for order (shared values) and outcome
	Human rights conventions, practice	Represents the most-significant legal standards built into order; demonstrates shared values and serves as an outcome measure
	Ratings on corruption and the rule of law	Measures one of the foundations for a shared order of rules and norms
Elite political and strategic signaling about the legitimacy of the order	Order-related official narratives, use of history	Creates a narrative on the health of the order
	Public statements on order	Creates a narrative on the health of the order
Public attitudes toward elements of the order	Public opinion and attitudes on elements of order	Measures public support for key values and institutions of order

**Table 1.3**  
**Snapshot of the Status of the International Order's Key Indicators**

Index of Order	Indicator	Status
Participation in formal international institutions	Membership in institutions, regimes	Stability in key measures and commitments (e.g., U.N.) but growing rebellion versus regional, global institutions
	Membership in alliances	Only question is renewal of U.S. commitment
	U.N. Security Council resolution and veto trends	<i>Unclear</i> : No measurable rise in vetoes but growing divergence of U.N. Security Council members
	WMD norms, institutions	Consensus on nonproliferation remains strong
	Support for new norms and institutions on emerging issues	Weak at state level: cyber failing, climate sliding backward; unofficial network norms show progress
Degree of participation in economic liberalization and interdependence	Trade, capital markets, FDI	Slowing trade integration and FDI; anti-trade sentiment
	Development assistance	Persistent; some key actors raising contributions, viewing it as a route to status and role in order
	Peacekeeping contributions	Persistent; some key actors view it as a route to status in order and as means to demonstrate commitment to order



Table 1.3—Continued

Index of Order	Indicator		Status
Respect for the order's core norms of sovereignty and peaceful settlement of disputes	Treaties of pacific settlement	Green	Remains stable in most areas
	Territorial changes resulting from conflict	Orange	Long-term trend positive; multiple measures show post-2012 spike; rising hostility and rivalry portend growing risks
	Levels of conflict	Yellow	Still no major interstate conflicts, but tension and risk of unintended conflict rising
	Aggression without U.N. Security Council approval	Gray	<i>Unclear</i> : No rise yet; states anxious to stay under thresholds of obvious aggression
Adherence to liberal procedures and norms	Global indexes of democracy	Yellow	Weakening but still huge gains from the 1980s
	Human rights conventions, practice	Yellow	Worsening in many countries relative to the 2000s
	Ratings on corruption and the rule of law	Gray	<i>Unclear</i> : Worsening in some areas; overall stability
Elite political and strategic signaling about the legitimacy of the order	Order-related official narratives, use of history	Yellow	Nationalism and populism generating selfish narratives
	Public statements on order	Gray	<i>Unclear</i> : Rising complaints but support the U.N. and the order
Public attitudes toward elements of the order	Public opinion and attitudes on elements of order	Yellow	Worsening but mixed picture; many areas of stability

NOTE: Green = stable or improving. Yellow = showing reason for concern. Orange = significantly threatened. Gray = unclear.

Structure of the Report

The chapters of the report follow the six indexes. Chapter Two examines state participation in the institutions of the order. Chapter Three considers relevant measures of economic interdependence, and Chapter Four examines the security-related indexes of the order. Chapter Five examines the status of liberal values and norms. Chapter Six surveys the current elite signaling about order from major powers, and Chapter Seven examines public opinion on a range of issues related to the order. In each of these chapters, we examine evidence for the 18 leading indicators, as well as related data that shed light on the status of those primary measurements.

The report thus unfolds thematically, not in the order of the indexes or indicators as thus far discussed. Table 1.4 outlines the treatment of the indicators by chapter.

**Table 1.4**  
**Structure of the Report, by Topic and Indicator Discussed**

Chapter	Indicators
Two: Participation in formal and regional international institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Membership in institutions, regimes</li><li>• U.N. Security Council resolution and veto trends</li></ul>
Three: Economic liberalization and interdependence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trade, capital markets, FDI</li><li>• Development assistance</li></ul>
Four: International conflict and peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Treaties of pacific settlement</li><li>• Territorial changes resulting from conflict</li><li>• Levels of conflict</li><li>• Peacekeeping contributions</li><li>• Membership in alliances</li><li>• WMD norms, institutions</li><li>• Aggression without U.N. Security Council approval</li></ul>
Five: Adherence to liberal norms and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Global indexes of democracy</li><li>• Human rights conventions, practice</li><li>• Ratings on corruption and the rule of law</li></ul>
Six: Major-power signaling and policies toward order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Order-related official narratives, use of history</li><li>• Public statements on order</li><li>• Support for new norms and institutions on emerging issues</li></ul>
Seven: Public attitudes toward elements of the order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public opinion and attitudes on elements of order</li></ul>

Following those chapters, Chapter Eight addresses two larger themes that emerged from the workshop: the dependence of any order on geopolitical dynamics, especially balances of power and interests, and on shared values. We attempt to make an overarching judgment about the degree to which these foundations of a stable order are in jeopardy. Finally, Chapter Nine offers lessons and implications from the health of the current order.



## Participation in Formal Regional and International Institutions

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As discussed in Chapter One, one way to begin assessing the health of the international order is to look at indicators of institutional inputs. The mere existence of an institution does not mean that it will achieve its goals, such as international peace or economic prosperity. Still, participation rates in the order and evidence that the institutions restrain great powers from acting arbitrarily are indications of the level of states' commitments to the order and its health.<sup>1</sup>

To assess the level of institutional effectiveness, participation, and great-power restraint, we evaluated multiple sources of evidence. We examined overall numbers of institutions, both public and private, and the trends in their formation over time. We assessed available data on state participation, including membership and the use of vetoes or dispute resolution mechanisms.<sup>2</sup> We also spoke with officials active in various institutions to get qualitative impressions of the institutions' current functioning.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ikenberry, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> The meaning of such mechanisms can be difficult to assess. The use of dispute resolution channels can signal the health of an institution or broader order by suggesting that states have procedural means to address differences. The mechanisms can also signal growing dissatisfaction with the underlying rules and a high degree of conflicting interests or perspectives. Available data are limited because they do not show clear evidence of the thought process behind many disputes. We have reviewed available evidence on the prevalence and trajectory of such mechanisms, statements about them by key states, and other sources of evidence to assemble the best possible interpretation of their meaning for the health of the order.

*While basic participation in institutions may not be a strong indicator, the bottom-line message from indicators of participation is generally positive for the health of the order.* From an institutional standpoint, participation rates remain high. Leading countries also rely on the U.N., the WTO, regional organizations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and many other institutions of the order to help resolve disputes, evaluate issues, and set rules.

*In spite of these positive indications, our research suggests three potentially worrying trends.* First, there are concerns that some of the major institutions of the post–World War II order are stagnating. Some officials familiar with the U.N. worry that competition among the great powers has led to inability to make major decisions, including on emerging challenges. Relatedly, although the WTO’s dispute resolution mechanisms remain in effect, there has been little progress on further trade liberalization within the WTO framework.

Second, and possibly as a result, states have been creating alternative, often informal, forums that are sometimes replacing the work done by some formal institutions. These trends could suggest institutional innovation that will revitalize the order. Alternatively, these could be early indications that the health of the order is waning.

Third, and perhaps most worrisome, the populist backlash against globalization and the international order that we examine in Chapter Seven has begun to force states to call into question their participation in and support for several institutions. From the United Kingdom’s (or, over time, Italy’s or Spain’s) role in the EU to the U.S. role in various established or proposed trade agreements to Russia’s standing in a range of U.N. agencies, the populist-nationalist collision with the order has already begun to shake its institutional stability. So far, these outcomes remain at the margins of the core institutions of order, and our essential conclusions about the stability of those institutions—from the U.N. to the WTO to regional bodies, such as the ASEAN—remain valid. The most-recent evidence from Europe suggests that the populist, anti-institutionalist wave may be easing to some degree. To the extent that this trend accelerates, however, the stability of the order’s deepest institutional foundations could be placed in jeopardy.

## Steady Institutional Participation

Some indicators of the order's health include the level of institutionalization and the degree of national participation in the institutions that make up the order.<sup>3</sup> As Figure 2.1 suggests, the postwar order has come to be characterized by a massive number of public and private institutions of various types, and that number appears to be holding steady. National membership in leading institutions, such as the U.N. and the WTO, is also holding firm. There is no sign of leading powers exiting the primary institutions of the existing order.

The order has been characterized by a wide range of institutions, and they have broadly experienced long-term growth and diversification over the past several decades. International treaties and agreements, in particular, exemplify this trend. Three scholars found that more than 6,000 treaties and agreements had come into being between 1648 and 1995, and they classified 632 of these as involving “human-centric law”—on human rights, the conduct of war, workers’ rights, and others. In assessing the period of the treaties in this category, the scholars found a fairly consistent pattern of new agreements through the 1970s.<sup>4</sup> Other work suggests that, from 1979 through 2002, the number of treaties registered at the U.N. grew by 400 percent.<sup>5</sup>

Another category of international institution is the international tribunal for such issues as trade and human rights.<sup>6</sup> Use of this

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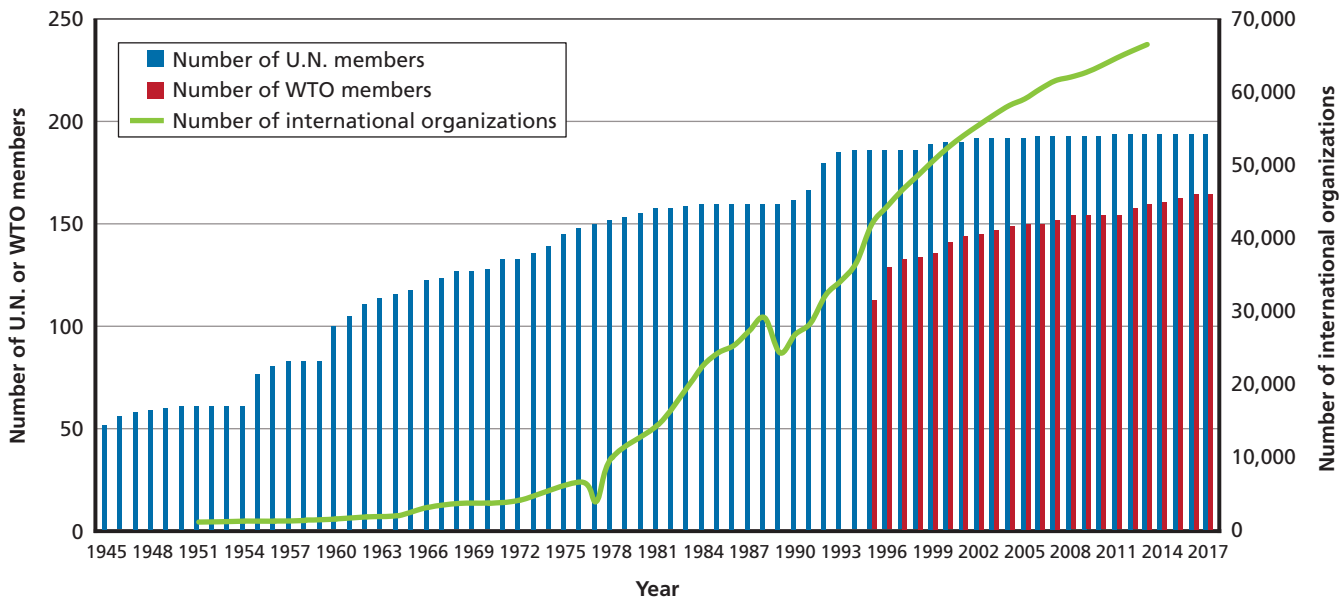
<sup>3</sup> For a good source on the basic set of international institutions, see Global Inventory of Statistical Standards, “List of International Organizations,” undated. See also Hale, Held, and Young, 2013, pp. 2–4, 42–43. Typically, these institutions are counted by assessing organizations that have been identified on formal lists, often through registering with national or international governing bodies.

<sup>4</sup> John King Gamble, Charlotte Ku, and Chris Strayer, “Human-Centric International Law: A Model and a Search for Empirical Indicators,” *Tulane Journal of International and Comparative Law*, Vol. 61, 2005, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory Shaffer and Tom Ginsburg, “The Empirical Turn in International Legal Scholarship,” *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 106, No. 1, January 2012, p. 12. See also Jacob Katz Cogan, “The Regulatory Turn in International Law,” *Harvard International Law Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Laurence R. Helfer and Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Why States Create International Tribunals: A Response to Professors Posner and Yoo,” *California Law Review*,

**Figure 2.1**  
**U.N. and WTO Membership Levels and Number of International Organizations, 1945–2017**



SOURCE: U.N., “Growth in United Nations Membership, 1945–Present,” web page, undated(a); WTO, “Members and Observers,” web page, undated(a); Union of International Associations, “Historical Overview of Number of International Organizations by Type,” 2013.

RAND RR1994-2.1



instrument has also grown significantly over the past several decades—although, as with many other areas of institutional growth, use of tribunals appears to have plateaued somewhat over the past decade. By 2012, there were some 25 formally established tribunal courts.<sup>7</sup>

We can also gauge institutional health by examining the use of veto and dispute resolution mechanisms. Two such indexes include cases submitted to the WTO dispute resolution process and vetoes at the U.N. Security Council. In both cases, the available evidence suggests that these mechanisms are on firm ground; Figure 2.2 summarizes the veto trend.<sup>8</sup> Stability in the number of WTO cases being filed suggests that states continue to see this as an effective way to settle disputes. If these numbers and the number of U.N. Security Council vetoes were declining, it might be an indication that states were losing faith in the processes. Rising numbers, on the other hand, could be an indication of growing disagreements or loss of faith in the institutions.<sup>9</sup> But according to available evidence, participation rates show neither declining effectiveness nor growing opposition within the institutions.

Other indicators tell a similar story. The total numbers of U.N. Security Council meetings, resolutions taken up, and resolutions passed have remained steady since about 2005. In 2014, for example, the council held the largest number of meetings since 2006, and it has

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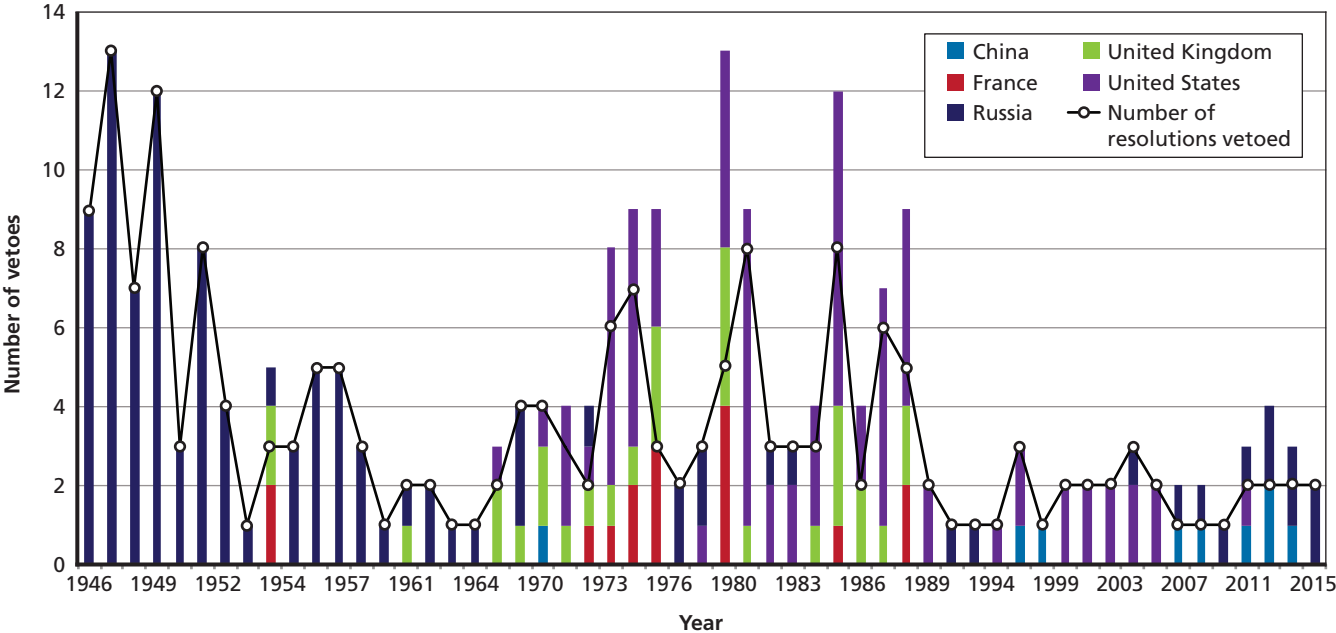
Vol. 93, 2005, p. 899; Andreas Paulus, "A Comparative Look at Domestic Enforcement of International Tribunal Judgments," *Proceedings of the ASIL Annual Meeting*, Vol. 103, January 2009; and Jillaine Seymour, "The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea: A Great Mistake?" *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Shaffer and Ginsburg, 2012, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> For a description of the WTO process and the most recent data on disputes filed and settled, see WTO, "The WTO Can . . . Settle Disputes and Reduce Trade Tensions," web page, undated(b); WTO, "WTO Dispute Settlement Body Developments in 2012," web page, undated(c); and Zaineb Aumir, "Compliance with Adverse WTO (World Trade Organisation) Rulings," *Courting the Law*, August 21, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> These recent data accord with the findings of slightly older studies. See, for example, Bruce Wilson, "Compliance by WTO Members with Adverse WTO Dispute Settlement Rulings: The Record to Date," *Journal of International Economic Law*, Vol. 10, No. 2, February 2007.

Figure 2.2  
Total U.N. Security Council Vetoes, 1946–2015



SOURCE: U.N., "Security Council Veto List," web page, undated(c).

RAND RR1994-2.2

steadily approved between 95 percent and 98 percent of its resolutions for a decade. In 2014, it approved 63 of 66 resolutions.<sup>10</sup>

There are limited sources of data on the operational effectiveness of major institutions of the order—how well they are staffed, the quality of their work, their financial status, and so on. To gain a limited snapshot to complement the data that do exist, we spoke to a handful of U.S. officials who are currently working—or who have recently worked—in or with leading institutions, including the WTO, the U.N., and international nonproliferation organizations. The resulting portrait of these institutions' operational effectiveness was somewhat mixed but basically stable, with no across-the-board reports of a generalized collapse. As one example, the pattern of some developing nations assigning their most-promising diplomats to the U.N., the WTO, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and other leading institutions appears to remain intact. Officials indicate that interactions between the leading powers in the U.N. also generally remain productive, although there was a significant rise in friction between the United States and Russia following the Ukraine crisis, given increasingly harsh rhetoric on both sides.<sup>11</sup>

One way to measure the coherence of an order is by looking at voting patterns among leading members in its key institutions. One interesting and consistent finding is that within the order's defining organization—the U.N.—voting patterns reflect a clear divergence in opinion between the United States and other countries. Erik Voeten's work on U.N. voting patterns strongly suggests that the "preference gap" between the United States and the rest of the world has "unequivocally" widened since the end of the Cold War. As a result, "the United States finds itself increasingly isolated on resolutions that have been on the agenda for a long time."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See U.N., undated(c). For overall information about resolutions adopted, see U.N., "Security Council Resolutions," web page, undated(b).

<sup>11</sup> Author discussions with U.S. officials, April 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Erik Voeten, "Resisting the Lonely Superpower: Responses of States in the United Nations to U.S. Dominance," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 66, No. 3, August 2004.

One of Voeten's key arguments, however, is that the divergence did not begin with the Iraq War; it was well under way in the 1990s. Yet the institutions of order continued to function relatively effectively. This could suggest that the order's stability is not reliant on convergent voting patterns, or it could mean that a long-term trend was only beginning in the 1990s and is now beginning to have more-significant effects on the ability to coordinate state activity and preferences. A fair amount of other data support this latter interpretation that the two-decade-old preference divergence between the United States and many other countries was a harbinger of a broad-based assertion of alternative points of view within the order.

At the same time, our discussions with and recent commentary from informed sources raise a concern about the procedural trends within several key institutions. Again, the WTO liberalization process is stalled, partly as a result of growing domestic political skepticism about trade accords but also because of disagreements about the shared regulations necessary for further trade liberalization. Still, working relationships between the leading states in the WTO remain cordial and productive, even if there is little agreement on major changes in the content of these institutions.

## **Integrating International Order into Domestic Institutions**

One of the primary ways in which the elements of international order achieve their effects is through integration with domestic interests and institutions. When an international organization reflects the interest of powerful domestic groups within a member state, or when that state integrates the values, rules, or norms of the order into its domestic laws and institutions, the state's participation in the institution of international order becomes more fully grounded. We therefore examined evidence bearing on whether the order's domestic institutionalization rate was holding steady, rising, or falling.

This is a complex question. There are no established measures for the degree of domestic institutionalization. Some indicators of it, such as domestic laws, might be misleading if they are not fully observed.

Some participating states clearly attempt to use domestic standards to signal concurrence with the order's norms—even if the states do not actually concur. It is not clear what degree of an order's connection to domestic interest groups would count as steady or as rising.

Nonetheless, there is some evidence in at least three areas—trade policy, environmental standards, and human rights—of the interaction between the international order and domestic policies, laws, and interest groups of member states.<sup>13</sup> A review of this evidence offers two very broad lessons. The first is that, along with many other measures of the order's health, the past several decades have witnessed a significant growth, and eventual stability, in the order's domestic penetration rates (as far as can be determined from the sometimes subjective and incomplete evidence available). Examples include the prominence and extent of human rights law in member countries, the role of domestic rights groups in tying their agendas to international norms, the example-setting effect of major powers' internal policies,<sup>14</sup> and the spread and elaboration of domestic environmental standards under the shadow of international treaties and conventions. Although single, objective data sets measuring these trends remain elusive, the range of evidence clearly indicates broad-based growth in domestic penetration.

The second lesson is that this connection between the order and domestic institutions and interests may have plateaued, at least in the many areas under consideration here. This judgment is conditional and admittedly based on limited evidence. But in a number of areas—such as the status of key regional institutions (e.g., the EU) and international environmental and trade law—recent years have seen a significant pushback against the domestic implications of international standards. The underlying backlash against so-called globalism is discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight and has fueled resentment of

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<sup>13</sup> On the general trend, see Anne-Marie Slaughter and William Burke-White, "The Future of International Law Is Domestic (or, The European Way of Law)," *Harvard International Law Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2, Summer 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin O. Fordham and Victor Asal, "Billiard Balls or Snowflakes? Major Power Prestige and the International Diffusion of Institutions and Practices," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 1, February 28, 2007.

the role of international law in domestic contexts. Domestic interest groups seeking to use international standards as justifications and rallying cries—whether in trade, human rights, or other areas—are facing growing resistance.

In environmental policy, for example, the diffusion of shared international norms continued through at least 2013. The number of domestic laws dedicated to climate issues grew from 40 in 1997 to nearly 500 by 2013. One quantitative study of this trend concluded that “the propensity to legislate on climate change is heavily influenced by the passage of similar laws elsewhere, suggesting a strong and so far under-appreciated role for international policy diffusion.”<sup>15</sup> This effect can emerge, in part, because international norms can activate domestic pressure to enhance environmental regulation.<sup>16</sup> One empirical study found an “impressive degree of environmental policy convergence” on environmental issues over time.<sup>17</sup> Yet, more recently, populist resentment of global interference in domestic sovereignty has begun to extend to environmental issues. This effect is partly political, reflecting the agenda of conservative or right-wing parties that have surged to power or gained greater influence in Europe and the United States. The result is likely to be a significant slowing in the process of integrating international standards into domestic law.

In trade and finance, the broad trends have been much the same. Over the past several decades, domestic experts and interest groups have been strongly tied to the evolution of shared trade rules.<sup>18</sup> Elabo-

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<sup>15</sup> Samuel Fankhauser, Caterina Gennaioli, and Murray Collins, “Do International Factors Influence the Passage of Climate Change Legislation?” *Climate Policy*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Ka Zeng and Josh Eastin, “International Economic Integration and Environmental Protection: The Case of China,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 4, December 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Katharina Holzinger, Christoph Knill, and Thomas Sommerer, “Environmental Policy Convergence: The Impact of International Harmonization, Transnational Communication, and Regulatory Competition,” *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No. 4, October 2008.

<sup>18</sup> David Bach, “Varieties of Cooperation: The Domestic Institutional Roots of Global Governance,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, July 2010; James R. Cohee, “The WTO and Domestic Political Disquiet: Has Legalization of the Global Trade Regime Gone Too Far?” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2008; and Nitsan Chorev, “A Fluid Divide: Domestic and International Factors in U.S. Trade Policy Forma-

rate trade treaties had powerful implications for all manner of domestic laws and regulations, and strong business interests generally lobbied for the liberalization process. Already, however, this progress has somewhat stalled with the stagnation in the latest WTO rounds and the inability to pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) or Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). And, today, the populist reaction against liberalized trade is likely to inhibit further progress: In his U.S. presidential election campaign, Trump declared an intention to sideline or even abandon the TPP.

In human rights standards, a powerful trend was under way through the early 2000s of integrating international human rights law and standards into domestic law.<sup>19</sup> Data on the momentum of this trend—the specific aspect of the international-domestic linkage—are difficult to come by. However, Chapter Five outlines broader evidence about the trends in respect for human rights, which display the same slowing of progress that may be occurring in other areas. There is at least anecdotal evidence of growing pushback against domestic interest groups using global rights standards to advance domestic law in such areas as migrant and minority rights.

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tion,” *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2007. On the Japanese case, which demonstrates, in part, the strong hold that traditional norms can have even in the face of international standards—but also the ways in which international standards can empower domestic reform groups—see Andrew P. Cortell and James W. Davis, “When Norms Clash: International Norms, Domestic Practices, and Japan’s Internalisation of the GATT/WTO,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1, January 2005.

<sup>19</sup> See Beth A. Simmons, *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010; European Commission for Democracy Through Law, *Report on the Implementation of International Human Rights Treaties in Domestic Law and the Role of Courts*, October 8, 2014; Ming Wan, “Human Rights Lawmaking in China: Domestic Politics, International Law, and International Politics,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3, August 2007; Scott L. Cummings, “The Internationalization of Public Interest Law,” *Duke Law Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 4, 2008; Amy Gurowitz, “Mobilizing International Norms: Domestic Actors, Immigrants, and the Japanese State,” *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 3, 1999; and Alan Brudner, “The Domestic Enforcement of International Covenants on Human Rights: A Theoretical Framework,” *University of Toronto Law Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1985.

## Increasingly Diverse and Informal Institutions

An important theme that emerged in our research—though one with unclear implications for the health of the order—points to the growing diversity of the institutional landscape under the broad umbrella of the rule-based order.<sup>20</sup> This could help either stabilize or destabilize the order, or it could have little independent effect.

This trend is apparent in several ways. It can be seen, for example, in the explosion of nongovernmental private organizations around the world. Ranging from nonprofits to medical or human rights groups to professional associations, these private groups have significantly outstripped official or semi-official international organizations in number and, on some issues, influence. They have created a dense institutional network within which policy unfolds.

A second way in which this trend is evident is the growing number of regional or newer intergovernmental organizations with greater influence.<sup>21</sup> Examples include the BRICS nations, the India-Brazil-South Africa group, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and even the G-20.<sup>22</sup> Many of them have weaker formal procedures, such as a lack of formal voting processes, or do not keep or publicize records or minutes.

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<sup>20</sup> Jochen Prantl, “Informal Groups of States and the UN Security Council,” *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 3, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> For a good survey of international nongovernmental organizations, see Repheal Ben-Ari, “International Nongovernmental Organizations: ‘Global Conscience’ or Powerful Political Actors?” *Jerusalem Issue Briefs*, Vol. 13, No. 20, July 15, 2013. See also Edward A. L. Turner, “Why Has the Number of International Non-Governmental Organizations Exploded Since 1960?” *Cliodynamics*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2010; and Anne-Marie Slaughter and Thomas Hale, “Transgovernmental Networks and Emerging Powers,” in Alan S. Alexandroff and Andrew F. Cooper, eds., *Rising States, Rising Institutions: Challenges for Global Governance*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010, pp. 48–62. Such organizations include important coordinating bodies, such as the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision.

<sup>22</sup> On the current status and prospects for the G-20, see Alan S. Alexandroff and John Kirton, “The ‘Great Recession’ and the Emergence of the G-20 Leaders’ Summit,” in Alan S. Alexandroff and Andrew F. Cooper, eds., *Rising States, Rising Institutions: Challenges for Global Governance*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010; and John Kirton, “The G-20 Finance Ministers: Network Governance,” in Alan S. Alexandroff and Andrew F. Cooper, eds., *Rising States, Rising Institutions: Challenges for Global Governance*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010.



In some cases, that is the source of their appeal: They represent a less formalized opportunity for senior leaders to get behind closed doors and discuss issues.

In most cases, this results in positive developments; if organizations can make progress on some issue (such as climate), that will benefit the order. But the risks are obvious: If the more established institutions of the order lose decisionmaking power, and if the order fragments into a dozen or more sometimes mutually suspicious subgroups, the order could become less capable of or effective in managing problems.

A third way in which the order's institutional basis is becoming more diverse is in the economic sphere, particularly the rise of alternative finance and development organizations. Some are sponsored by China (e.g., the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank), while others are joint projects of rising major powers (e.g., the New Development Bank).<sup>23</sup> Over time, the combined capitalization of these alternative institutions may dwarf the IMF and the World Bank.

A fourth manner in which the order is becoming institutionalized in more-informal ways is through the rise of what are sometimes called *soft-law agreements*.<sup>24</sup> These are less formalized than treaties but still establish de facto rules that states are committed to following. Soft-law agreements can have many of the same signaling and commitment benefits as formal treaties, few of which have ironclad enforcement components in any case. One empirical study found that the number

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<sup>23</sup> On the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and related institutional developments, see Daniel McDowell, "New Order: China's Challenge to the Global Financial System," *World Politics Review*, April 14, 2015. On the New Development Bank, see Leslie Maasdorp, "What Is 'New' About the New Development Bank," *World Economic Forum*, August 26, 2015; and Raj M. Desai and James Raymond Vreeland, "What the New Bank of BRICs Is All About," *Washington Post*, July 17, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> See Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal, "Hard and Soft Law in International Governance," *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 2000; Gregory C. Shaffer and Mark A. Pollack, "Hard Versus Soft Law in International Security," *Boston College Law Review*, Vol. 52, No. 4, September 1, 2011; and Dinah Shelton, *Commitment and Compliance: The Role of Non-Binding Norms in the International Legal System*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

of informal economic agreements grew significantly from the 1990s through mid-2000s but tapered off somewhat afterward.<sup>25</sup>

The ultimate effect of this trend is unclear, but it raises intriguing possibilities. The order of 2030 or 2050 could be far more pluralistic and, to some degree, fragmented than it is today, with power and influence spread among more leading states and overlapping networks of various forms of institutions. The institutional hierarchy that exists today—with the U.N., WTO, World Bank, and IMF sitting clearly at the top—may well be disrupted. The result may be a more shared, sustainable order, or it may be one without shared rules or norms. A clear implication is that U.S. strategy must get comfortable with operating in a far more complex and diverse institutional and normative landscape.

## Building New Institutions

One of the major indicators of the international order's health is its ability to respond to emerging challenges. From an institutional perspective, this indicator directs our attention to the ability of new or existing institutions to address emerging challenges. The evidence on the ability of the existing order to meet this criterion is so far mixed.

There are important and well-publicized examples of areas in which new institution-building clearly lags behind the apparent need. These areas include regulations for climate change, financial markets, and cyber activities, among others. Official U.S. documents and strategies in these areas have called for institutionalized rules, norms, and codes of conduct to help promote cooperation and stabilize relations among states. In each of these areas, however, fundamental disagreements over the best way forward have obstructed progress.<sup>26</sup> In none of them has a significant binding agreement emerged.

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<sup>25</sup> Stefan Voigt, "The Economics of Informal International Law: An Empirical Assessment," in Joost Pauwelyn, Ramses Wessel, and Jan Wouters, eds., *Informal International Lawmaking*, Oxford, UK: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Roger Hurwitz, "The Play of States: Norms and Security in Cyberspace," *American Foreign Policy Interests*, Vol. 36, 2014. Many international organizations have called for such norm-building. For example, the U.N. expert panel on telecommunications and informa-

Of this group, regulations related to climate have shown the most promise, with nonbinding but significant summits and shared commitments pointing the way toward a global strategy to constrain warming at a critical threshold of 2°C.<sup>27</sup> U.N. meetings and accords, combined with commitments at a series of international conferences (most recently in Paris), have provided a focal point for discussions and established a framework for addressing the problem.

It is possible to interpret the existing evidence in different ways. To be sure, progress on regulations for climate change, financial markets, and cyber activities has been uneven so far. Judged against a standard of rapid and decisive action, for example, the global response to climate issues has been weak. Judged against the standard of general multilateral action on major issues—especially given the political salience of so many of the associated economic questions—one could argue that the level of commitments achieved and the progress under way is somewhat impressive. There is a difference, too, in judging actions against the standard of what is needed to solve the problem versus what is feasible from the standpoint of collective action.

In sum, the verdict offered by the status of rules, norms, and institutions on emerging international issues is mixed. There has been an important degree of coordination and technical work, but the emergence of more-formal rules and norms has been slower.

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tion technology pointed again in 2015 to the need for more-formal rules and norms (Henry Róigas and Tomáš Minárik, “2015 UN GGE Report: Major Players Recommending Norms of Behaviour, Highlighting Aspects of International Law,” NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, August 31, 2015). See also United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, *Report of the International Security Cyber Issues Workshop Series*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2016; Catherine Laporte-Oshiro and James Shires, “Negotiating Order in Cyberspace: Choosing Economic Governance over Security Spirals,” German Marshall Fund, February 2016; and Scott Warren Harold, Martin C. Libicki, and Astrid Stuth Cevallos, *Getting to Yes with China in Cyberspace*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1335-RC, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> The most recent development as of this writing is India’s accession to the Paris agreement (Chris Mooney and Brady Dennis, “India Just Ratified the Paris Climate Deal—Bringing It Extremely Close to Taking Effect,” *Washington Post*, October 2, 2016). For a general description of the agreement, see European Commission, “Paris Agreement,” undated.

The stability or, in some cases, apparent stagnation of growth in these and other indicators (discussed later) could lend itself to various interpretations. One is that there is a generalized loss of momentum and confidence in the existing order, leading to a slowing of the growth of institutions. But an equally plausible interpretation is simply that some of the original ambitions of the order have reached a natural limit. The system may have simply reached a point where the low-hanging fruit of cooperation has been picked, and any further liberalization would require domestic alterations that many countries are unprepared for. Such an interpretation would not suggest that the order is failing to do what it is supposed to do; it may just mean that the order has done most of the work it is capable of doing and is in a maintenance phase rather than a growth phase.

## Regional Institutions

Another important measure of institutional participation is the health of regional economic and political institutions. The indicator we use to gauge the health of such institutions examines the status of regional processes of (1) economic integration and institutionalization and (2) political and security cooperation. Specifically, we reviewed the status of three sample regional groupings: the EU, the ASEAN, and Latin America's Mercosur (with Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela). Properly designed and executed, such regional integration and cooperation mechanisms can play an important role in building a generalized order. For example, if the regional institutions promote universal rules and norms, help stabilize major components of the global economy, and inculcate multilateral habits of problem-solving, they can strengthen the global order.

As with the other indicators in this group, the status of regional institutions is an imperfect guide to the health of the global order. The existence of such institutions does not equate to effective problem-solving, for example. In the case of both the EU and the ASEAN, institutions have struggled with major issues of economic integration and policymaking. Taken to their extreme, regional organizations

could provide an exclusionary alternative to a rule-based global order. Nonetheless, well-functioning regional organizations can provide an important component of a larger order, inculcating habits of collective problem-solving, pushing more-intensive rules of interaction, and offering regionally tailored forums for dispute resolution.

Our survey of these regional institutions reveals a mixed but generally positive picture. The survey shows a somewhat diverse pattern, although it is difficult to compare the institutions directly, because various regional bodies have very different histories, purposes, and depth of integration.

The EU is under significant strain, but this is tied to its intensely institutionalized character, recent macroeconomic challenges, and a rising immigration crisis. Overall trade and financial integration levels remain very robust, and there was a slight but somewhat remarkable recovery in public faith in the EU between 2012 and 2015, followed by another dip in confidence (see Chapter Seven).

It cannot be denied that the EU faces daunting challenges, especially in the wake of the June 2016 vote in the United Kingdom to leave the Union (commonly referred to as *Brexit*).<sup>28</sup> Brexit has raised fundamental questions about the meaning and future of the EU. Some argue that it will provide momentum to similar nationalistic campaigns in other EU states, which could eventually fracture the whole Union. Others worry that an economically weakened United Kingdom—and perhaps a divided one, if Scotland were to vote for independence partly under the banner of rejoining the EU—would be unable to contribute meaningfully to NATO, which would then suffer a devastating blow. Russia, which has been seeking to undermine Western institutions, seems to be applauding the result.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For recent analyses of the implications of Brexit, especially for the EU and the broader international order, see Sophia Besch and James Black, “Brexit: What Have We Learned So Far?” *Survival*, Vol. 58, No. 5, September–October 2016; Francois Heisbourg, “Brexit and European Security,” *Survival*, Vol. 58, No. 3, May 2016; William A. Galston, “The Shrinking of the Liberal Order,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 21, 2016; and Joe Klein, “The Brexit Vote Heralds a Return to the Grim 1930s for the Liberal World Order,” *Time*, June 30, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> On Russia’s approach to the order, see Andrew Radin and Clint Reach, *Russian Views of the International Order*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1826-OSD, 2017.

It is too early to tell which way events could break. For every doomsday scenario, there is an equally plausible potential future in which the United Kingdom's exit is managed with a minimum of disruption, and other European populaces are chastened by the example of the price the United Kingdom has paid. A broader question is whether a healthy postwar international order relies on the prospects for regional institutions: Even if the EU were to weaken, would this necessarily cascade into damage to other rules, norms, and institutions? Again, many outcomes are possible.

The most recent evidence available at the time of writing pointed to a slight easing of the imminent threat to the EU's future. The United Kingdom declared its intention to go forward with Brexit but made clear a desire for continuing strong relations with the EU.<sup>30</sup> Some European officials have signaled a desire for as close a relationship as possible even given the break.<sup>31</sup> Security cooperation is continuing and indeed increasing through NATO channels, linking the United Kingdom's fate closely to Europe's. Many key actors thus appear to be attempting to manage the reality of Brexit with the least damage to the EU and broader relationships. For its part, the government in London has powerfully signaled that Brexit is a unique action and does not imply a British rejection of the order: Prime Minister Theresa May has called for building "a truly global Britain" in the wake of the EU withdrawal.<sup>32</sup>

Beyond Brexit, however, there is the even more fundamental problem of the status of the euro currency and EU solidarity more broadly. Recent analyses have suggested that economic policy in Europe may have been stalled by a combination of debt, eurozone constraints, and irreconcilable differences over fiscal policy.<sup>33</sup> The EU may have entered a period of intensifying crisis in which it becomes impossible to jump-

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<sup>30</sup> See "Theresa May's Brexit Speech in Full," *Telegraph*, January 17, 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Jess Staufenberg, "Brexit: Britain Could Have 'Special Status' Relationship with EU, Says German Minister," *Independent*, August 17, 2016.

<sup>32</sup> James Masters, "Brexit: Theresa May to Unveil Plan for 'Global Britain,'" *CNN*, January 16, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, "Europe's Ugly Future: Muddling Through Austerity," *Foreign Affairs*, November–December 2016.

start economic growth. Over time, more countries may be tempted to take the United Kingdom's route and return to a national currency, which would have significant implications for the future of the EU.

The EU case highlights one potential risk that emerges from this analysis: order overreach. The postwar order is arguably in most trouble, and the tensions it creates are most intense, where it has pushed furthest to build and enforce its rules. This includes armed democracy promotion, the extension of NATO, and the rule-making of the EU bureaucracy. What we are seeing in Europe today is not so much a rejection of institutionalized and rule-based order per se but of its most elaborate, and sometimes unaccountable, varieties. A challenge for the coming years will be to find ways to scale back the order at its leading edges without creating a cascading effect.

And yet, again, the most recent evidence offers reason for hope that these trends are stabilizing. Just a few years ago, as the Greek debt crisis heated up, some predicted that the EU would collapse amid a series of cascading parallel crises in Spain, Italy, and beyond. Yet, so far, those issues have been managed, partly because of powerful interventions by the European Central Bank. As one recent analysis concludes, "The problem with this perception of an impending European chain collapse is that it is not borne by facts. None of Europe's electoral tests since Brexit [has] set off a domino effect."<sup>34</sup> Examples include Spain, where an election three days after Brexit brought to power a pro-EU, center-right coalition and where some of the defining anti-EU populist parties in Europe fared poorly. In Austria, the nationalist and anti-EU candidate Norbert Hofer lost, as did the populist Geert Wilders in the Netherlands. The nationalist Marine Le Pen suffered a decisive defeat in the May 2017 French elections, and German far-right parties are losing ground.<sup>35</sup>

This evidence suggests that the historical bargain represented by the EU remains more robust than had been feared in recent months. Public opinion polling also demonstrates some stability: In the Decem-

<sup>34</sup> Pierpaolo Barbieri, "Europe's Reverse Domino Effect," *Foreign Affairs*, March 16, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Bröning, "There Is No Alternative: Why German's Far-Right Populists Are Losing Steam," *Foreign Affairs*, March 10, 2017.

ber 2016 Eurobarometer poll, slightly *more* Europeans had a positive image of the EU and described themselves as “citizens of the EU” than in the previous survey.<sup>36</sup> Clearly, the EU has many challenges to overcome, not least the inherent economic stresses of the combined market. But the idea that it was on a fast track to dissolution must now be replaced with a more measured judgment that takes into account the powerful residual support for the Union and its key institutions.

Beyond Europe, the leading Southeast Asian regional organization, the ASEAN, has demonstrated a significant growth in reach, institutionalization, and confidence levels over the past decade. Degrees of national integration in the region have become significant.<sup>37</sup> At the economic level, ASEAN members laid out a 2007 goal of achieving financial integration by 2015.<sup>38</sup> This remains a work in progress, but the goal is still in place. Overall, intraregional integration remains substantial and growing, although the proportion of intraregional trade may have leveled off between 2012 and 2014. Liberalization measures are under way in selected ASEAN states, although nontariff barriers and export controls remain common. More broadly, the ASEAN has become deeply institutionalized, with multiple subinstitutions (such as the Regional Forum, Defense Ministers’ Meeting, and East Asia Summit).

In the Americas, a growing set of regional economic, technical, and political institutions has fostered a wide range of consultation and cooperation but remained largely a lesson in unmet expectations. Earlier hopes for formal regional integration on an EU-style model stagnated, in part, over differing political trajectories in major Latin American countries.<sup>39</sup> The most prominent regional organization, Mercosur, has not resulted in significant degrees of regional economic integration—

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<sup>36</sup> The data are available at European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 86*, December 2016.

<sup>37</sup> See Asia Regional Integration Center, “Integration Indicators,” web page, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Geert Almekinders, Satoshi Fukuda, Alex Mourmouras, Jianping Zhou, and Yong Sarah Zhou, *ASEAN Financial Integration*, IMF Working Paper, WP/15/34, February 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Council on Hemispheric Affairs, “21st Century Regionalism: Where Is Latin America Headed?” September 3, 2013.



most member states trade significantly more with Europe than with Latin America—or generated political convergence.<sup>40</sup> Building on such important but not entirely successful regional pacts, several leading regional powers have more recently suggested a forum called the Pacific Alliance, built around Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.<sup>41</sup>

In sum, the progress of regional economic institutions over the past several decades has provided an important part of the growing density of the order's rules, norms, and institutions. In many cases, this trend has served to reinforce the basic norms of the order, such as neo-liberal economics and human rights.

But the picture is very mixed. In some cases, such as in Latin America, long-term hopes for regional integration have consistently run aground on differences in political outlook, rivalries, personality conflicts among leaders, and other factors. The EU is increasingly looking like an example of liberal institutional overreach, and poor economic performance and an often overbearing Brussels bureaucracy are prompting a widespread reaction against the organization, from even well beyond the United Kingdom.<sup>42</sup> Institutional momentum in Asia may be slowing amid tensions between China and other regional states, as well as recurring nationalism in Japan, Korea, and elsewhere.

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<sup>40</sup> See "Mercosur's Missed Boat," *Economist*, May 12, 2016; Laura Gomez-Mera, *Power and Regionalism in Latin America: The Politics of Mercosur*, Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 2013; Claudio A. Paiva, "On the Irrelevance of Mercosur: Evidence from Foreign Direct Investment," *Latin American Business Review*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4, July–December 2015; Mariana Mota Prado and Vladimir Bertrand, "Regulatory Cooperation in Latin America: The Case of Mercosur," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, November 2015; and Sergio Caballero Santos, "Identity in Mercosur: Regionalism and Nationalism," *Global Governance*, Vol. 21, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> See Moises Naim, "The Most Important Alliance You've Never Heard Of," *Atlantic*, February 17, 2014. On the prospects for the organization, see Christine Daniels, "The Pacific Alliance and Its Effect on Latin America: Must a Continental Divide Be the Cost of a Pacific Alliance Success?" *Loyola of Los Angeles International and Comparative Law Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2, October 1, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Jakub Grygiel, "The Return of Europe's Nation-States," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2016.



## Economic Liberalization and Interdependence

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One of the central components of the post–World War II order has been the set of global and regional economic institutions. These institutions facilitated the rise of a more economically interdependent world that is both a goal of U.S. policy and a way to promote peace. If the globalized world economy were to begin to fragment, the basis of interests and preferences underlying the order might shift. In this chapter, we examine the health of this part of the order by looking at global trends in three main indicators of economic interdependence: trade and financial integration levels, provision of foreign aid, and the status of regional trade organizations.

*The fundamental message of this set of indicators is that the economic foundations of the order remain very powerful, but there is now significant reason for concern about future trade and investment behavior.* Levels of global trade, investment, and trade intensity have grown significantly in recent decades and reflect a tightening global economic integration with important implications for the rule-based order. In fact, the postwar era represents one of tremendous growth in the basic indexes of development, trade, and democracy.<sup>1</sup> The commitment of national governments to these goals remains substantial, as reflected in support for regional trade pacts. China’s engagement in the WTO system, while never reflecting an ideal commitment to reciprocity, nonetheless continues, and U.S. trade experts and negotiators report that Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> For a treatment placing these developments in the context of international institutions, see Beth A. Simmons, Frank Dobbin, and Geoffrey Garrett, “The International Diffusion of Liberalism,” *International Organization*, Vol. 60, No. 4, Autumn 2006.

trade officials continue to use the global trade architecture to condition their own behavior.

More recently, however, the evidence suggests that the momentum toward trade integration has slowed, while many countries—responding, in part, to political and business pressures attendant to slow growth and growing inequality—have expanded their use of nontariff barriers. The WTO process is largely stalled in a post-Doha stagnation and shows little sign of regaining momentum. Exclusionary pressures on U.S. companies also appear to be growing. This evidence suggests that one of the most important foundations of the rule-based order—the global commitment to achieving mutual prosperity through economic integration—has paused, and its future is less certain than at any time in decades. The Brexit vote and the 2016 U.S. presidential election reflected populaces increasingly skeptical of the virtues of economic integration, and the result in both cases could be rising protectionist and mercantilist behavior.

The answer to this potential challenge is not obvious. Given the perceived economic side effects of trade and financial liberalization, the popular basis for deepened integration is mixed at best (although, as we discuss in Chapter Seven, public opposition to trade is less consistent than recent reports suggest). Any agenda to preserve and deepen the integrative foundations of the order must address the by-products of integration, including the adjustment costs of trade and rising inequality. One of the most powerful dilemmas in the preservation of the order, in fact, is that the multilateral order will depend on unilateral domestic economic reforms on the part of many leading countries. In this sense, some domestic reaction against the neoliberal consensus of the past 20 to 30 years was probably inevitable—and necessary as a catalyst for more attention to the outcomes of the order. The question now is whether that reform ends up undermining the global trade order rather than preserving it.

## Trade and Financial Integration

For a basic snapshot of the health of the economic foundations of order, we looked to such issues as trends in global trade, the trade patterns of leading countries, measures of trade intensity, FDI flows, and other measures of integration with the global economy.<sup>2</sup>

Because these indicators are influenced by so many macroeconomic variables, they represent an indirect measure of the health of the order. Trade could slow or decline for reasons having nothing to do with the order's rules, norms, or institutions. For example, recently falling commodity prices have cut into the total value of trade, a shift that does not reflect any weakening of the order per se. Trade and financial integration levels are also dependent on long-term trends and may not necessarily show short-term changes in state behavior. Even if a state is behaving in ways that run counter to the order's rules and norms, it might remain deeply integrated in global markets.

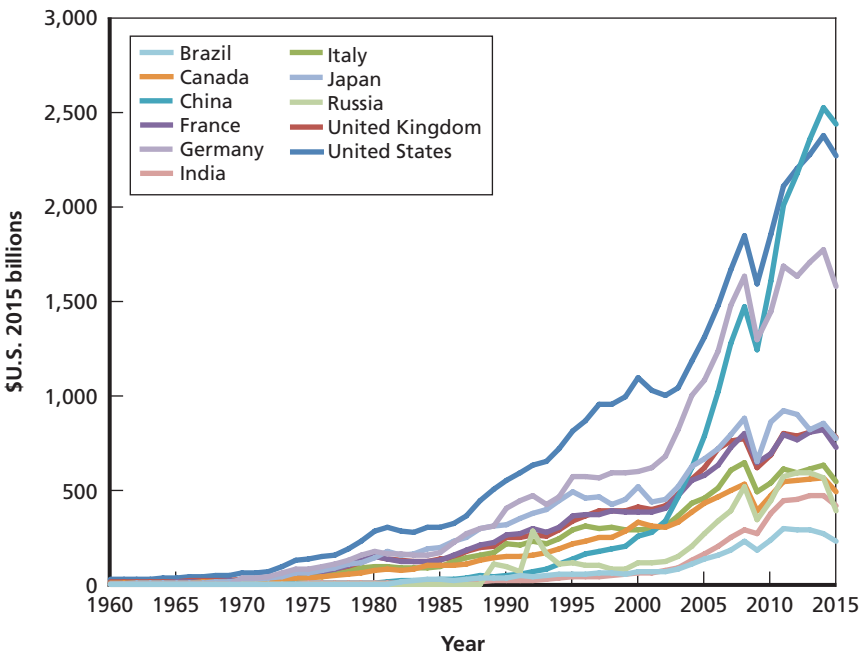
Nonetheless, both the economic realities underpinning the order and countries' behavior toward trade rules and institutions give an important sense of the status of the foundations and behavior of the order. In this sense, trade and financial integration levels are as much a measure of a reality with implications for order-building preferences as much as they are a direct measure of the status of the order. Some historical parallels also suggest the importance of these indicators as a measure of the strength of an order. During the 1930s, for example, the decline in economic interdependence between the United States and Japan was indicative of a collapsing post-League of Nations order. There is evidence that economic decline and instability can undermine the order through various pathways that are demonstrated empirically. Thus, global economic integration and growth are at least negative signals—that is, signs that the order is avoiding conditions that would undermine its health.

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<sup>2</sup> Trade volume data are available from many sources. See, for example, World Bank, "Export Volume Index," web page, undated(b).

Figures 3.1 through 3.3 summarize the general trend of trade integration, measured in terms of global trade as counted in exports and degrees of trade integration. General trade and investment levels remain high after a strong recovery in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, but there is a moderate medium-term decline under way, though likely for reasons having little to do with state preferences for membership in the order. The general pattern, and specific trends within states, is stability and some recovery after the financial crisis. Perhaps the most important story told by the data is that no major country is exempting itself from global trade. During the height of the Cold War, as a comparison, the Soviet Union's trade amounted to only 4 to 5 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), and more than 60 percent of that was with Com-

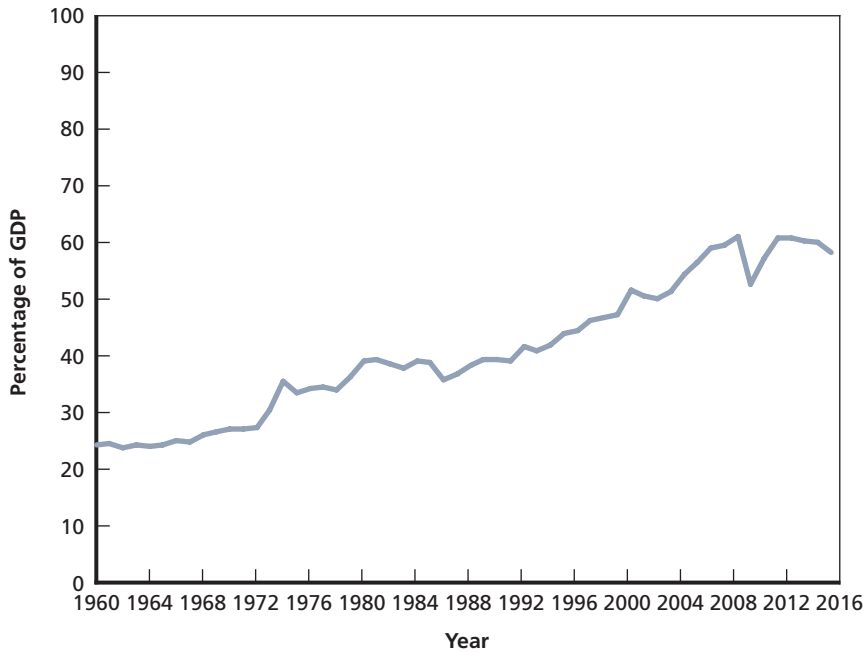
**Figure 3.1**  
**Exports, Largest Economies, 1960–2015**



SOURCE: World Bank, "DataBank," web page, undated(a).

RAND RR1994-3.1

**Figure 3.2**  
**Trade as a Percentage of GDP, Worldwide, 1960–2016**



SOURCE: World Bank, undated(a).

RAND RR1994-3.2

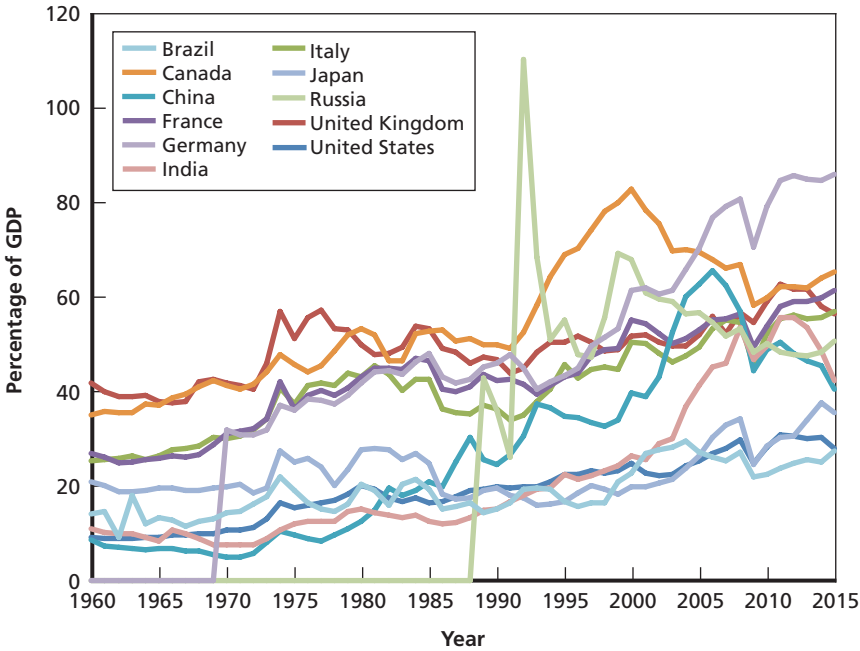
munist countries (although this figure fell during the late Soviet period as Moscow sought to increase trade with the West).<sup>3</sup> No major country today is so autarkic, and none has a prospect of becoming so.

On the other hand, global trade levels have definitely weakened since 2011. Global net trade volume is down, attendant to general macroeconomic trends, particularly the slowdown in the EU.<sup>4</sup> However,

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Leon M. Herman, "The Economic Content of Soviet Trade with the West," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 29, Autumn 1964; Library of Congress, "Chapter 15: Foreign Trade," in Raymond E. Zickel, ed., *Soviet Union*, Washington, D.C., May 1989; and Marshall I. Goldman, "Will the Soviet Union Be an Autarky in 1984?" *International Security*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Spring 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Johannes Fritz, "What's Happened to World Trade?" World Economic Forum, November 13, 2015. See also Eduardo Porter, "On Trade, Angry Voters Have a Point," *New York Times*,

**Figure 3.3**  
**Trade as a Percentage of GDP, Largest Economies, 1960–2015**



SOURCE: World Bank, undated(a).

RAND RR1994-3.3

net trade is expected to recover going forward, and trade as a percentage of economic activity ratios is still at historic highs. But for the time being, the evidence of slowing trade integration is substantial. As the McKinsey Global Institute has indicated, global flows of goods, finances, and services are down more than 14 percent from their peak in 2007 and, after a brief post-financial crisis burst, have stagnated.<sup>5</sup>

March 15, 2016; and Trine Flockart, Charles A. Kupchan, Christina Lin, Bartłomiej E. Nowak, Patrick W. Quirk, and Lanxin Xiang, *Liberal Order in a Post-Western World*, Washington, D.C.: German Marshall Fund, Transatlantic Academy, 2014, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, *Digital Globalization: The New Era of Global Flows*, McKinsey and Co., March 2016, pp. 2–3. See also Jeffrey Rothfeder, “The Great Unraveling of Globalization,” *Washington Post*, April 24, 2015.



More broadly, the emphasis on bilateral and regional as opposed to global trade agreements has grown steadily. One analysis refers to the “emergence of a new, more fragmented and decentralized global economic order, in which global multilateral institutions—such as the IMF or World Bank—play only a limited role alongside regional organizations and national strategies.”<sup>6</sup>

We may be witnessing economic globalization’s shift to new levels rather than its end. The primary argument of that McKinsey report is that “digital globalization”—that is, global transfers of information and knowledge, through searches, direct communications, digital broadcasts, and other forms of shared data—is becoming a better indicator of global interdependence than trade in finished goods or capital. This points to growing e-trade and exchanges of digital goods, which are increasingly central to all advanced economies. The growth of this sphere—a 45-fold explosion of global bandwidth since just 2005—offers a more positive indicator of global participation in networks of interdependence.

There is significant evidence that international trade agreements, institutions, and norms exercised a restraining role on protectionist measures after the 2008 crisis. Some studies have suggested that the post-crisis trade restrictions totaled far less than previous experience would have suggested. Several indexes of trade freedom point to a significant recovery after 2008 and not much of a drop-off during the crisis.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, according to a range of measures of tariffs and formal protectionist activities, leading countries rarely resorted to such tools during the post-crisis period.<sup>8</sup>

Yet the evidence is far from consistent, and many sources have argued that protectionism did creep up after the 2008 financial crisis—and has, in fact, spiked in subsequent years. The main distinction in the analyses appears to be between assessments of formal tariffs and other protectionist measures and of more-informal or murky efforts

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<sup>6</sup> Flockart et al., 2014, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the Heritage Foundation, “Index of Trade Freedom,” undated; and Simon Fraser Institute, “Index of Economic Freedom,” web page, December 13, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> For an examination of this evidence, see Drezner, 2014, pp. 39–42.

to gain trade advantage. Looked at through these more-complex but still important lenses, there is growing evidence of leading countries increasingly resorting to trade restrictions.<sup>9</sup> Partly as a result of economic slowdowns and the need to convince domestic populations that they are responding to hardship, governments are using all manner of nontariff approaches to handicap foreign companies.

The future of global trade integration remains highly uncertain. If the two major regional trade agreements now in play (TPP and TTIP) were to go into effect, the results could be significant. The TPP alone would, in theory, eliminate more than 18,000 trade barriers.<sup>10</sup> There are a wide range of estimates of the likely trade and economic effects of those agreements. Interestingly, both are being presented and justified as much for geostrategic reasons as economic ones: Neither seems likely to generate remarkable effects on global economic growth rates, but each is intended to link regional economies in the two leading areas of U.S. interests in ways that are designed, in part, to reinforce and advance the existing order. The intent behind the treaties—a supposition that is beyond the scope of this analysis—is that further trade integration and formalization of trade and finance rule sets on a regional basis will deepen the institutionalization of global exchange.

Yet the prospects for both deals are uncertain because the political headwinds for each have become quite significant. Both the French and German governments have suggested that TTIP ratification should be put off indefinitely.<sup>11</sup> The Trump administration has now formally withdrawn the United States from the TPP. More broadly,

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<sup>9</sup> Georgios Georgiades and Johannes Gräb, “Growth, Real Exchange Rates, and Trade Protectionism Since the Financial Crisis,” *VoxEU*, December 8, 2013; and Robert Grundke and Christoph Moser, “Evidence of Hidden Protectionism in the U.S. in the Great Recession,” *VoxEU*, June 2, 2016. See also Shawn Donnan, “WTO Warns of Creeping Protectionism,” *Financial Times*, June 18, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> See Office of the United States Trade Representative, “Trans-Pacific Partnership,” web page, undated; and Flockart et al., 2014, pp. 31–35.

<sup>11</sup> Antonia Colibasanu, “France and Germany Call to End Trade Talks,” *Geopolitical Futures*, August 31, 2016; William G. Frasure, “U.S. Presidential Election Campaign Dims Prospects for TPP,” *Diplomat*, May 18, 2016.

the WTO and financial reform processes have stalled in recent years, with little progress on institutionalized rules or initiatives.<sup>12</sup> Neither agreement looks headed for easy ratification in the United States today. The defeat, or long-term stagnation, of both agreements could deal a significant blow to the order's trade foundations. It would be a signal that the order's progress, in economics at least, has come to a temporary halt.<sup>13</sup>

More broadly, as we catalog in Chapter Seven, public opinion in key trading states, especially in the United States and Europe, is turning somewhat against free trade. The actual polling numbers, at least so far, do not appear to match the level of media hype over the issue. Public opinion on trade in the United States remains highly complex and still generally supportive of many aspects of trade, but a growing minority of voters is becoming increasingly suspicious. If this were to continue to grow into a general rejection of trade, the results for the order would be disastrous.

But there are contrary indications as well. Support for trade in Asia remains very strong. One of the most potentially important recent actions on trade—which passed nearly unnoticed during the debate about Brexit—was India's decision to substantially liberalize trade rules, an action described as “sweeping changes . . . to throw open its economy to foreign investment.”<sup>14</sup> Foreign companies will now be allowed full ownership of Indian subsidiaries in many fields, including defense.

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<sup>12</sup> Hale, Held, and Young, 2013, pp. 154–171.

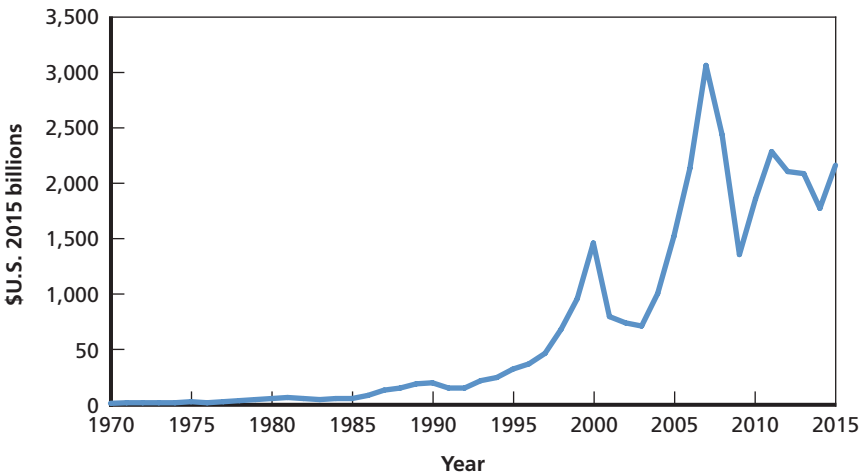
<sup>13</sup> There are many possible outcomes of a defeat of the TPP, the TTIP, or both. Combined with stagnation in recent rounds of the WTO, the general discourse today supports an interpretation that such events would accelerate the loss of faith in the global trade integration agenda. Combined with such recent events as Brexit and the rise of populist and protectionist sentiment in the United States and Europe, the defeat of these two centerpiece agreements would likely be viewed as a signal of limits to the order.

<sup>14</sup> Geeta Anand and Hari Kumar, “Hoping Jobs for India Follow, Modi Clears Investors’ Path,” *New York Times*, June 20, 2016.

### Capital Markets and Foreign Direct Investment

The story for capital flows and foreign investment is largely similar to that of trade, though with a more pronounced recent decline. Figure 3.4 shows the sharp drop in FDI levels during and after the 2008 financial crisis, followed by some recovery. FDI is a particularly volatile indicator and thus an imperfect measure of the health of a long-term order. Nonetheless, recent patterns are indicative of a possible stagnation in global investment.<sup>15</sup> By 2014 and 2015, cross-border capital flows were recovering significantly, showing spikes that exceeded pre-crisis levels. As with trade in goods and services, however, global financial flows have stagnated in recent years, and they remain only half as large as

**Figure 3.4**  
**FDI Net Inflows, Worldwide, 1970–2015**



SOURCE: World Bank, undated(a).

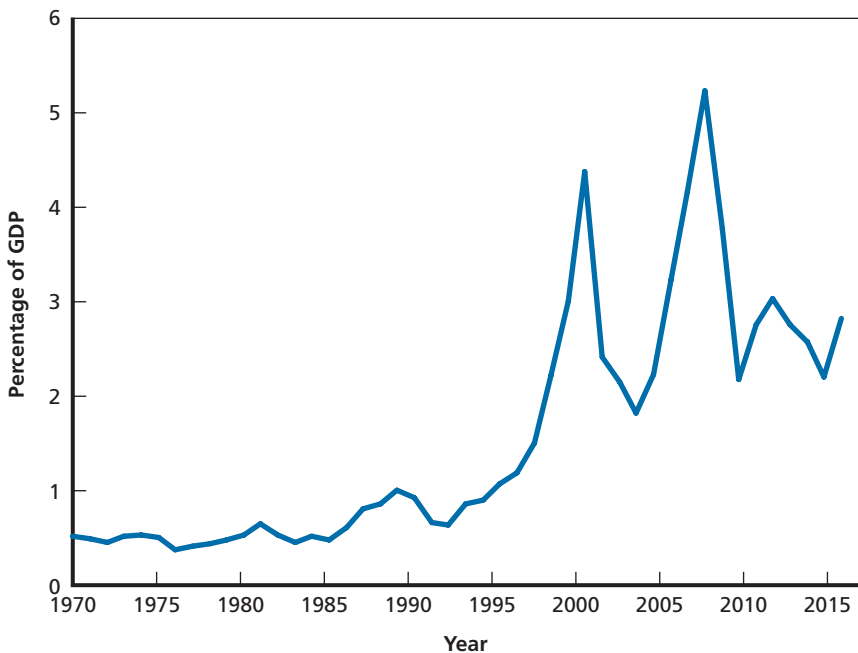
RAND RR1994-3.4

<sup>15</sup> A McKinsey study in 2013 reported that “cross-border capital flows remain 60 percent below their precrisis peak, and growth in financial assets around the world has stalled” and that “cross-border capital flows have collapsed,” falling from \$11.8 trillion in 2007 to less than \$5 trillion in 2012 (Susan Lund, Toos Daruvala, Richard Dobbs, Philipp Härle, Ju-Hon Kwek, and Ricardo Falcon, “Financial Globalization: Retreat or Reset?” McKinsey Global Institute, March 2013).

their pre-crisis peak in absolute terms—and one-third as large in terms of global GDP.<sup>16</sup> As Figure 3.5 indicates, FDI flows as a percentage of GDP have remained relatively stable since 2009.

These measures also point to the dangers of volatility in global capital markets, a problem that has hardly been solved after 2008 and that dangerously exacerbates other economic risks to the order. On the other hand, the order has sustained a series of financial crises since the 1980s without being run substantially off course. There is some debate about whether recurring financial volatility poses a severe or only moderate threat to the future of the order. Two sources of concern are the

**Figure 3.5**  
**FDI Net Inflows as a Percentage of GDP, Worldwide, 1970–2016**



SOURCE: World Bank, undated(a).

RAND RR1994-3.5

<sup>16</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, 2016, pp. 3–4.

especially slow recovery from the most recent crisis and the implications of long-term slow growth for the order.

There is evidence that leading states recognize the problems of volatile capital markets, especially after 2008, and have moved to stabilize them through both domestic and international actions (such as the U.S. Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act and the Basel III international regulations). There is significant debate over whether these measures are sufficient, and that debate is beyond the scope of this report. But these actions do reflect a cooperative set of initiatives to deal with capital market vulnerabilities; even if imperfect, the initiatives reflect movement in roughly the right direction.

One interesting measure that combines trade, financial flows, and other measures of integration is the Swiss Economic Institute's Index of Globalization.<sup>17</sup> This measures such noneconomic variables as communication links and numbers of McDonald's restaurants, but its foundation comprises basic economic forms of integration. The findings of the two most recent surveys, in 2015 and 2016, are that measures of globalization are stagnating worldwide. They have not begun to fall off but appear to have reached a plateau as a result of slow economic growth and other factors. This index roughly parallels the findings in trade and finance—steady growth in integration through the mid-2000s, a sharp decrease during the recession, and an initially strong recovery followed by stagnation.

To be clear, stagnation in and of itself is not necessarily a signal of a damaged order; it could be that the available progress has been made for the time being and that the institutions of the order are entirely stable. But given the emphasis on growth—that is, growing global trade and financial integration as a clear sign of presumed progress in the order—the slowdown in growth has been a source of worry and could cause perceptual challenges for the order.

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<sup>17</sup> The index and data are available at ETH Zurich, "KOF Index of Globalization Index," 2016.

## Response to Crises

The importance of capital markets and FDI is indicative of another, more qualitative measure of the health of the order: its ability to respond to crises. In these economic realms in particular, if the order cannot repair itself after major challenges, it will gradually fragment. The evidence to date on this score—though, again, somewhat subjective—appears to be reassuring: When major economic crises have hit, the leading countries of the order have collaborated to save it from collapse and shore it up against similar threats in the future, usually by working through the order's major institutions.

A good example is the behavior of leading countries during the 2008 financial crisis. Drezner has chronicled numerous elements of the global institutional response to the crisis. He concludes, "Despite initial shocks that were more severe than those of the 1929 financial crisis, global economic governance responded in a nimble and robust fashion in 2008."<sup>18</sup> We might reasonably argue that, at least in that case, the institutions and norms of the international order proved resilient, especially compared with historical parallels. The example also demonstrates the leading role of economics in the order: International trade and finance are the areas in which rules and institutions are most advanced and interests are most widely shared.

Yet there is a question about whether this degree of responsiveness can be expected on more slow-burning issues. One important critique of the current order is that it is gridlocked on a host of leading policy issues.<sup>19</sup> In particular, collective action can take a long time to unfold. On issues that take a long time to develop and solve (e.g., for climate or cyber issues), it has proven difficult to achieve significant breakthroughs without the impetus of a crisis. This is not especially new, of course; it is a classic problem in collective political action.<sup>20</sup> The question is whether a slow and incomplete response to these issues will ultimately sink the order for one reason or another.

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<sup>18</sup> Drezner, 2014, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> The most important statement of this view is Hale, Held, and Young, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> See Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965.

## Development Assistance

The development assistance indicator is based on the theory that states' levels of foreign aid reflect their commitment to an integrating order and underwrite specific institutions of order in the development sector.

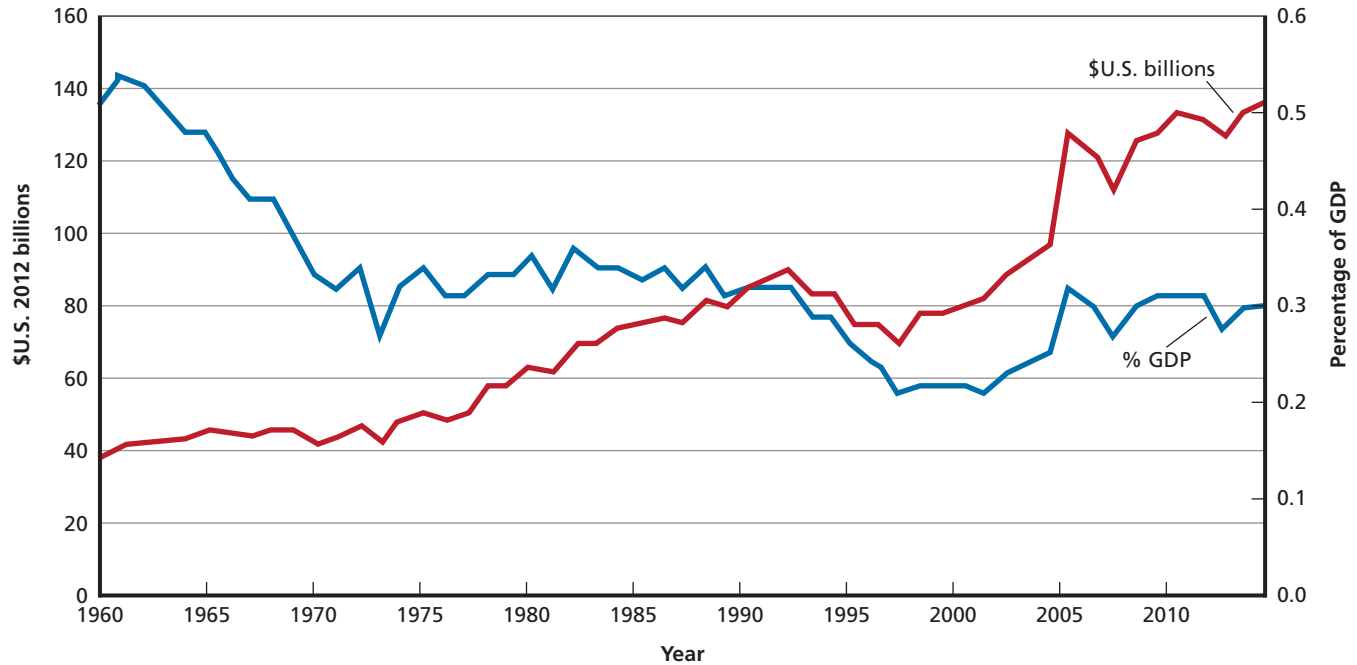
States pursue foreign aid for many reasons, largely as products of perceived national interest. The decision to emphasize aid in a state's foreign policy can simply be an avenue to status-seeking or the result of the influence of domestic humanitarian interests. Moreover, levels of aid are not always directly correlated with development; aid effectiveness is a separate issue from aid levels. Without conditions, aid might not promote rules, norms, or standards. Granted to states unwilling to abide by the order's normative basis, aid might actually undermine the goals of the order, especially its liberal elements. In this sense, China's growing aid portfolio may be a double-edged sword that helps countries develop but also undercuts the conditionality of Western aid designed to promote better governance.

But a general rise in aid levels could be a sign that the system has a sense of mutual obligations and is working to contribute to shared norms, in ways that both recognize and strengthen an underlying order. This was true with the early U.S. efforts to build the order. The United States' initial aid programs in Europe, and eventually its support for the World Bank and other development- and aid-oriented institutions, reflected a sense that the economic and social health of the order demanded some degree of support from wealthier nations. Moreover, economic aid is often channeled through international development organizations, whether global or regional, thus contributing to the institutionalization of the order. Such organizations can develop rules and standards that make the resulting aid a force for normalization.

Therefore, while it may be a mixed or indirect indicator, the provision of economic aid can both signal commitment to an order and help underwrite the order's stability. As noted in Figure 3.6, levels of foreign aid have generally continued to rise in absolute terms. As the data suggest, several donor nations have significantly increased their contributions relative to GDP. Some nations, particularly China and Brazil, have become extremely active donors that place global development goals high on their foreign policy priority list. Moreover, in the



**Figure 3.6**  
**Net Official Development Assistance, Worldwide, 1960–2014**



SOURCE: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Net ODA," chart, 2016.

RAND RR1994-3.6

larger context, global levels of development have risen markedly over previous decades, which is the result of many factors.<sup>21</sup>

One possible caution about the role of economic aid in the order is that the level of conditionality—in which aid is tied to reforms in areas ranging from good governance to human rights—may be declining. Such countries as China, India, and Brazil tend to oppose conditionality in aid programs, viewing it as a symbol of Western value imposition.<sup>22</sup> If the role of aid as a spur to liberal reforms declines, that could affect the normative basis of the order. Yet there is also contrary evidence—for example, some recent indication that China has become increasingly skeptical of granting large amounts of aid without any conditions or strings attached.<sup>23</sup> To some degree, the outcome of this issue depends on the degree to which economic development on its own will generate order-supporting rules, norms, and institutions without strong conditionality.

One survey of trends in trade, economic institutions, foreign assistance, and other economic categories of the order has suggested that a “creeping de-Westernization” of the global economy is under way. Referring to the basic economic institutions of the post-1945 order, including the WTO (formerly General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) process, one study concludes that the “Bretton Woods institutions used to be the transmitter of liberal values. That time is over.”<sup>24</sup> These claims are blunt, but the evidence surveyed in this chapter tends to support them, with qualifications. Many material and institutional foundations of the international economic order remain robust and are unlikely to disappear. But the many forces for change, from growing regional institutions to changing economic values, suggest that the assumption that Western-led institutions and norms will continue to dominate the global economic order must be revised.

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<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Steven Radelet, “Prosperity Rising: The Success of Global Development—and How to Keep It Going,” *Foreign Affairs*, January–February 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Flockart et al., 2014, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> Kristin Huang, “China Must Act More Wisely in Giving Out Foreign Aid, Says Xi Jinping,” *South China Morning Post*, February 9, 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Flockart et al., 2014, pp. 19, 22.

## International Conflict and Peace

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One goal of the current international order is to prevent conflict and promote the peaceful settlement of interstate disputes. The level and intensity of conflict can therefore indicate the health of the order. Leading nations have sought to promote and strengthen respect for the nonaggression norm primarily through multilateral treaties and organizations, as well as mutually dependent networks and structures. We acknowledge, however, that effects and inputs other than those of the international order—such as the deterrent effect of U.S. military power—may also constrain conflict and aggressive behavior in the international arena.

This chapter surveys indicators in three areas: treaties promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes (a measure of institutional input), territorial changes from conflict, and levels of conflict (two measures of international outcomes).

*The key takeaway from this set of indicators is that the broad trends in conflict have been positive and stable for some decades, and there is so far no significant backsliding in such mechanisms as peace treaties.* There has been a steady increase in the number and variety of organizations, institutions, and treaties that promote the peaceful settlement of disputes, and permanent territorial changes from conflict have been rare in the years since World War II. Indicators of the incidence of militarized disputes over time suggest a stable pattern of conflict, at very low levels from a historical standpoint.

Overall, the combination of empirical trends in conflict and institutional growth since 1945 tells a relatively optimistic story. The post-

war order aligns with a period in which interstate war has been exceptionally rare. Numerous conflict management organizations, treaties, and norms have arisen during this period and reflect one of the cardinal principles of that order—not using force (that is, the norm of non-aggression), particularly to revise national boundaries.

Yet it remains admittedly difficult to establish causality. Efforts to examine the causes of conflict and peace through quantitative studies remain immensely challenging because of multiple variables and difficulty in assigning clear responsibility for outcomes to any given factor. We can associate the period of the postwar order with peaceful trends and make *theoretical* and case-based arguments for the positive effects of the order, but we cannot claim conclusively that the order is responsible for these results. These uncertainties make it more difficult to assess the current health of the order. Negative trends in conflict, for example, might or might not signal that the order is in trouble. Other factors might be at work.

However, these general, benign conclusions must be offered with one significant caveat. The long-term trends have been positive, but since 2014, there has been some backsliding with respect to this norm. It is too early to tell whether this represents a serious divergence from recent patterns or a temporary one.

Finally, in this chapter, we attempt to look beyond existing empirical trends to grapple with a more subjective question: Will the existing order be capable of its primary task in restraining conflict—that is, preventing great-power war? The order—with all of its rules, norms, and institutions—is hardly the only variable that will determine that outcome. But some of its primary components, such as alliance structures, are designed to prevent great-power war, and we briefly assess their potential to continue to do so. More broadly, however, it appears that the United States faces a fundamental choice in the order's role in preventing conflict between major powers: Does the order primarily exist to organize and justify the confrontation of revisionist states or to maintain cooperative great-power relations? Each of these approaches would involve a distinct approach to preventing war.

## Treaties of Pacific Settlement

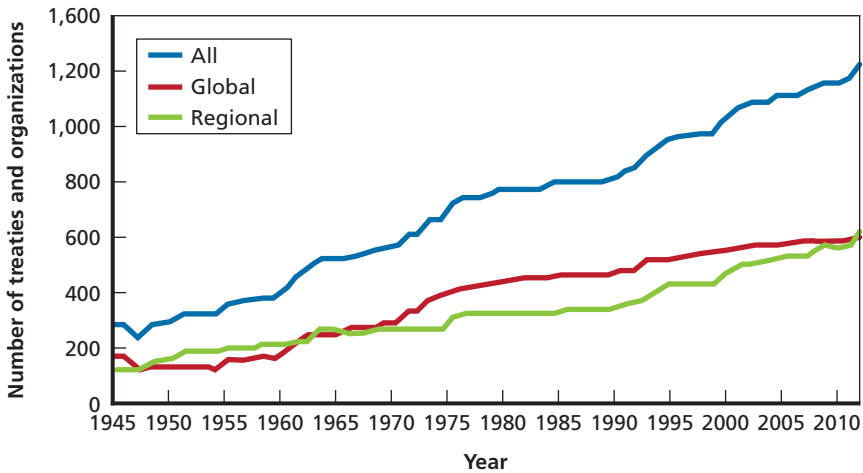
Formal peace treaties, cease-fires, international organizations, and even bilateral confidence-building measures seek to promote the peaceful resolution of disputes. Global bodies, such as the U.N. and the International Court of Justice, are joined by a variety of regional organizations and treaties, such as the NPT, dedicated to the peaceful settlement of international concerns. These institutions and treaties have not served as a panacea against all aggression—the post–World War II international order has not eliminated war—yet measuring them can offer insights into how the order has promoted and strengthened norms and values that pressure states to pursue nonviolent dispute resolution.

The number of multilateral treaties and organizations dedicated to the peaceful settlement of disputes has steadily increased since the end of World War II. A Correlates of War data set records the number of treaties and organizations with more than five members that call for peaceful dispute resolution among members. Since 1945, the number has increased from about 300 to more than 1,200 by 2011 (Figure 4.1).<sup>1</sup> While the increase in such mechanisms does not guarantee peace, it may signal the preference of states—particularly militarily weaker ones—to resolve disputes peacefully. The increase may also signal that states understand that other states expect them to exhaust peaceful avenues for dispute resolution before resorting to armed conflict. For example, using the militarized interstate dispute data from the Correlates of War project, we find that only 12 states have initiated such disputes since 1990. This set is dominated by three Western countries that have undertaken peace enforcement or other norm-enforcement operations (the United States, France, and the United Kingdom) and also includes China, Russia, Iran, and a handful of states in violent neighborhoods—India, Turkey, Burma, North Korea, Israel, and Ethiopia. The norm of nonaggression remains reasonably stable, or has until recently.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul R. Hensel, “Multilateral Treaties of Pacific Settlement (MTOPS) Data,” data set, version 1.5, 2014.

**Figure 4.1**  
**Multilateral Treaties of Pacific Settlement, 1945–2011**



SOURCE: Hensel, 2014.

RAND RR1994-4.1

We caveat our findings with an acknowledgment of the limited enforcement capabilities of international law. For example, the United States withdrew from the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. Secondly, while an overall success, the NPT did not prevent North Korean acquisition of nuclear weapons. And thirdly, the U.N. and international community have failed to respond to violations of territory and other redlines on more than one occasion. Thus, a numerical increase in treaties and organizations dedicated to peaceful conflict resolution is an incomplete measure of respect for the nonaggression norm and must be augmented with additional indicators.

### **Territorial Changes Resulting from Conflict**

Instances of unjustified territorial aggression and aggression without U.N. Security Council sanction challenge the authority of the international order. Often, but not always, the international community responds to unjustified military violations of sovereignty. Some coun-

tries have viewed recent U.S. actions in Iraq, Libya, and Syria as a violation of the nonaggression norm; however, it can be argued that the United States undertook these to defend other norms of the order, including respect for human rights and the nonproliferation of WMD.

Nonetheless, the degree of response to acts that are categorized as relatively unequivocal violations of international law and the nonaggression norm is fairly impressive. Several criteria are available to judge an international response to aggression:

1. Do many leading states condemn in the context of the norms and rules of the order?
2. Do states use formal organizations to meet, vote, and dialogue to counteract moves?
3. Do states impose economic penalties through international organizations?
4. Do states move, militarily or otherwise, to support victims of aggression?
5. Do states escalate the dispute, taking counteracting moves in other areas?
6. Do states cut diplomatic relations or fundamentally exclude violators from the order?
7. Do states undertake military action against the violators?

Applying these conditions to recent forms of aggression—such as Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Serbian aggression and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans in the 1990s, and Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014—the track record of the international community is reasonably good. The Iraq and Serbia cases hit all seven criteria; the response to Russia’s aggression has included five or more criteria (a sixth if we count expulsion from the Group of Eight [G-8] as an example of being excluded from the order). The record becomes more spotty in cases of secondary or “gray-zone” (unconventional) aggression, such as China’s activities in the South China Sea, but these are designed to avoid unambiguous transgression of the order’s rules. There is some evidence, therefore, that the community of states at the core of the order has roused itself to enforce norms of nonaggression and continues to do so.

On the whole, permanent territorial changes from conflict remain extremely rare, even when unsanctioned territorial aggression does occur.<sup>2</sup> Although wars and conflicts have occurred with some regularity since the end of World War II, the international community has also responded to overturn and repulse violations of sovereignty. For example, Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait met stiff, multinational military resistance and was overturned. Since 1949, incidences of a territorial change resulting from conflict have been remarkably rare—four in 1949; one in 1961; three in 1967; and one each in 1974, 1975, 1976, and 2014.<sup>3</sup> The 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea serves as a sharp exception to the norm of recent decades in that the international community has not pushed back as significantly as it has in other cases. Challenging a powerful state's violation of the norm of nonaggression now carries higher political, economic, and military costs. This disparity allows certain states more room than others to violate the norm in pursuit of national interests.

Such interstate wars have not disappeared, but they remain infrequent. Interstate wars began most frequently during the early 1960s through the mid-1980s, with an additional spike in the late 1990s. Figure 4.2 outlines the long-term trends in the initiation of new conflicts since 1945, adapted from the Center for Systemic Peace. As the figure makes clear, the number of interstate conflicts being initiated (our primary area of interest with the international order) has declined to exceptionally low levels over the past decade.

Territorial disputes, such as those in the South China Sea, linger and continue to pose threats to international stability. While countries struggle to resolve decades-old disputes, new territorial claims are becoming less frequent. Figure 4.3 shows that the rate of newly initiated claims has been steadily dropping since the end of World War I and has reached historically low levels since the beginning of the 20th century.

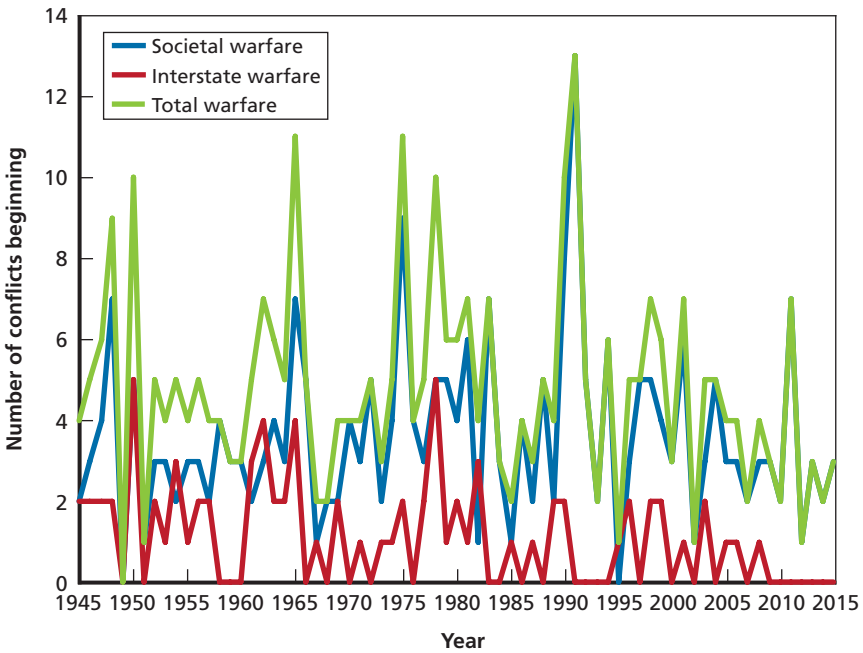
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<sup>2</sup> On general conflict trends in the context of the postwar order, see Hale, Held, and Young, 2013, pp. 72–81.

<sup>3</sup> Jaroslav Tir, Philip Schafer, Paul F. Diehl, and Gary Goertz, "Territorial Changes, 1816–1996: Procedures and Data," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1998.



**Figure 4.2**  
**Global Trends in Armed Conflict, 1945–2015**

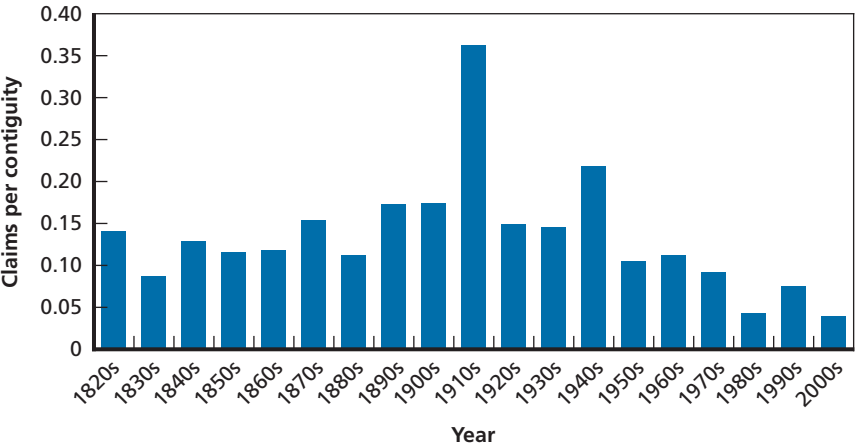


SOURCE: Adapted from Center for Systemic Peace, "Global Conflict Trends," web page, 2014.

RAND RR1994-4.2

Although new territorial claims have become less frequent and permanent territorial changes from conflict are rare, some states challenge the norm of nonaggression and pose a threat to the stability of the international order through their handling of territorial disputes. States may choose to pursue historical territorial claims with more or less fervor depending on political or other factors that change over time. Tallying the number of new territorial claims does not account for whether the pursuit of these claims is more or less aggressive over time. Likewise, counting successful versus unsuccessful attempts to conquer or annex territory does not account for the fact that a state may choose to wage a limited conflict to successfully pressure an adver-

**Figure 4.3**  
**Territorial Claims Initiated per Dyadic Contiguity**



SOURCE: Bryan A. Frederick, *The Sources of Territorial Stability*, dissertation, Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, 2012. Used with permission.

RAND RR1994-4.3

sary to change its course of action. While the state might not have achieved a territorial change as a result of conflict, it has nonetheless achieved its aims through violating the norm of territorial aggression.

### Status of Controls on Weapons of Mass Destruction

Another area in which the postwar order has made important contributions to security affairs is in constraining and regulating the spread of WMD. The institution of the NPT—as well as parallel and supporting institutions (such as the International Atomic Energy Agency) and norms (such as not using nuclear weapons)—have played important stabilizing roles and helped prevent the rush of nuclear weapon proliferation that many expected in the 1970s.

A significant literature has pointed to the value of the NPT as one of the more successful institutions of the postwar order. The treaty

boasts nearly universal membership, with 191 countries having joined.<sup>4</sup> Despite some alarmist forecasts of a boom in nuclear proliferation, only nine countries to date have developed nuclear weapon capabilities, even though more than 40 additional countries have the capacity to produce their own nuclear weapon systems.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, a handful of countries that did build their own bombs—South Africa, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan—decided to destroy or surrender their weapons.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, the treaty has enjoyed a fair amount of compliance with its core stipulation that members (with the exception of the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members, which have nuclear weapons) must refrain from building or otherwise acquiring nuclear weapons.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, numerous scholars argue that the NPT has effectively prohibited the spread of nuclear weapons. These academics believe that if the NPT did not exist, more countries would be more likely to seek and spread nuclear weapons.<sup>8</sup>

The NPT has arguably achieved these results through various means. It has done more than simply reflect state decisions that would have occurred independently of the treaty. Rather, the NPT actively fosters international cooperation by providing a forum for open commu-

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann and Lupu Yonatan, "Do Arms Control Treaties Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty," unpublished manuscript, August 31, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Maria Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint*, Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2009, p. 421.

<sup>6</sup> Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed*, New York: Norton, 2003, p. 182.

<sup>7</sup> Kurt M. Campbell, Robert J. Einhorn, and Mitchell B. Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004, pp. 7–9.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Andrew Coe and Jane Vaynman, "Collusion and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 77, No. 4, 2015; Virginia Page Fortna, "Scraps of Paper? Agreements and the Durability of Peace," *International Organization*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 2003; Nicholas L. Miller, "The Secret Success of Nonproliferation Sanctions," *International Organization*, Vol. 68, No. 4, 2014; and Nuno P. Monteiro and Alexandre Debs, "The Strategic Logic of Nuclear Proliferation," *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2014.

nication and sharing of information;<sup>9</sup> establishing trust between actors through transparency, oversight, and repeated interactions;<sup>10</sup> mitigating uncertainty about other members' intentions and capabilities;<sup>11</sup> and increasing the costs of violating treaty obligations by establishing punitive measures for defections and holding states accountable to each other.<sup>12</sup>

This component of the order appears to be holding, at least for now. The nonproliferation norms of the order helped gather a decisive coalition to achieve the Iran nuclear deal, and pressure is growing on North Korea. Otherwise, there is no major signal, thus far, of any new surge of interest in proliferation. This is true even among such states as South Korea and Japan, which are threatened by North Korean nuclear weapons. The indicator tied to nonproliferation, therefore, suggests stability in the order.

## Levels of Conflict

Although permanent territorial changes resulting from conflict have been remarkably rare since the end of World War II, various forms of conflict have continued to occur despite the international community's efforts to seek peaceful means of resolving conflict.<sup>13</sup> As suggested in Figure 4.2, the long-term trends have generally been positive, especially in the realm of interstate war, which has declined to negligible levels in recent decades. Yet the most-recent trends, from 2008 to

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<sup>9</sup> Xinyuan Dai, "Information Systems in Treaty Regimes," *World Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 4, 2012, p. 408.

<sup>10</sup> Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and Paul R. Hensel, "International Institutions and Compliance with Agreements," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 2007, p. 722.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Meyer, *The Dynamics of Nuclear Proliferation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Dai, 2012, p. 412.

<sup>13</sup> Glenn Palmer, Vito D'Orazio, Michael Kenwick, and Matthew Lane, "The MID4 Data Set, 2002–2010: Procedures, Coding Rules and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2015.

the present, have been more concerning. According to evidence cited in this section, the occurrence of conflict has slightly increased, and certain periods have seen notable spikes in internal conflict (some of which has become internationalized through the involvement of outside actors), particularly the late 1980s.

Figure 4.4 offers another window into the incidence of conflict—the level of high-fatality conflicts, both internal and interstate, over time. As the figure suggests, that level had dropped significantly during the 2000s but now appears to be rising again. (This figure does not disaggregate among severity of conflicts or distinguish between civil wars and interstate conflict. But it is one of many databases that point to a recent growth in conflict.) According to Uppsala University, after yearly deaths from battle remained relatively low throughout the early 2000s, they increased significantly in 2014 and 2015.<sup>14</sup>

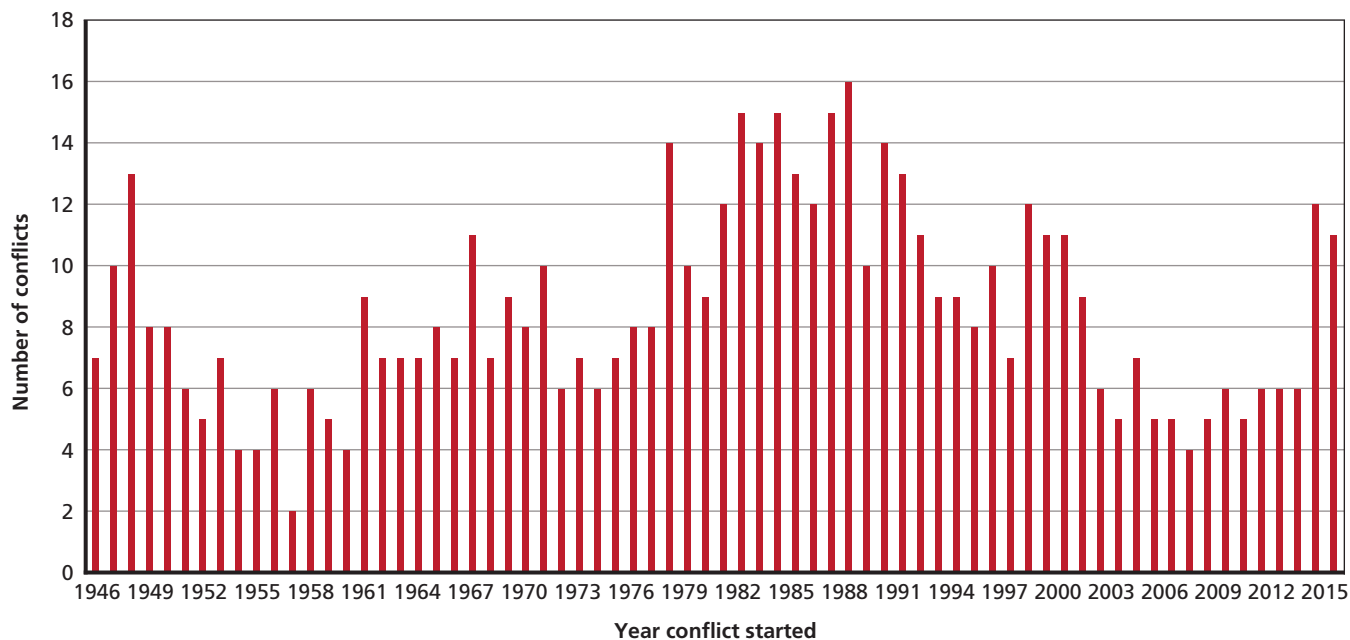
Indeed, more-recent events, such as the conflict in Ukraine, were not reflected in some of the key conflict data sets, which extended only to 2010. Conflict data sets that run through 2015 or 2016 generally show a significant uptick in interstate conflict after that point. One example is the Uppsala University Conflict Data Program, whose data show conflict levels hitting a recent low point in 2010 and rising substantially after that.<sup>15</sup> As of 2014, the data set tracked 40 ongoing conflicts in 27 locations, up almost 20 percent from the prior year and the highest number of ongoing conflicts recorded since 1999. As two analysts summarized the data, “Since the end of the Cold War, the number of armed conflicts in the world has decreased substantially. . . . For the past ten years, however,” the data indicate “an uneven, yet clearly visible, upward trend, particularly the growing number of internationalized armed conflicts.”<sup>16</sup> This evidence represents a major reason for concern about the fraying of the outcomes desired by the order.

<sup>14</sup> Uppsala University, “Uppsala Conflict Data Program,” web page, undated.

<sup>15</sup> See the basic trend line graph and data at Uppsala University, undated.

<sup>16</sup> Therése Pettersson and Peter Wallensteen, “Armed Conflicts, 1946–2014,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 2015, p. 536.

**Figure 4.4**  
**Number of High-Fatality Conflicts Started Each Year, 1946–2015**



SOURCE: "UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, Version 4, 2016," Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, Uppsala Conflict Data Program; Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, Center for the Study of Civil War, 2016.

RAND RR1994-4.4

Yet the negative trends remain strictly constrained, and it is important to keep in mind how rare interstate conflict has become. Of the 40 “conflicts” identified by the Uppsala data set, only 11 count as “wars” (with more than 1,000 battle deaths in a single year). Of the 40 conflicts, 39 were internal, although more are becoming “internationalized” through the involvement of outside actors (as in Syria). Only a single case counted as a true interstate war: the India-Pakistan conflict, which is mostly frozen and accounted for fewer than 50 deaths in 2014. Also during 2014, parties to ten conflicts concluded peace agreements, up from six the year before.<sup>17</sup> The bottom line is that while some concerning trends are under way, the level of interstate conflict remains minimal by historical standards.<sup>18</sup>

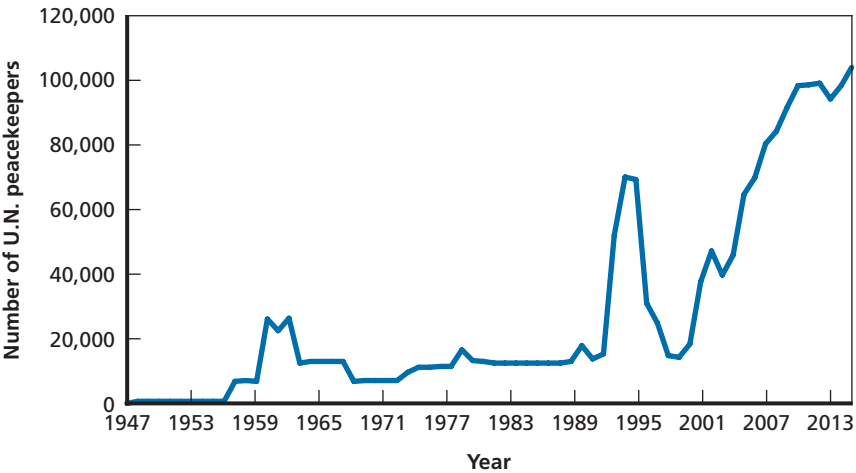
One final measurable factor that bears on the commitment of states to a conflict-reducing order is global participation in peacekeeping operations. As Figure 4.5 suggests, states have made a growing commitment to such activities. While that figure points only to numbers of troops participating, which could theoretically be misleading (if a few countries dramatically ramped up while others stayed aloof from the missions), it is symptomatic of an increasing commitment on the part of many states—notably, Brazil, India, and China. As noted in Chapter Six, many emerging powers have viewed peacekeeping operations as a leading route to a more prominent role in the international order. In some cases, these operations have made a significant difference in stabilizing volatile contexts. Taken together, this constitutes an important indicator of the stability of the order.

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<sup>17</sup> Pettersson and Wallensteen, 2015, pp. 537, 544.

<sup>18</sup> Uppsala University, undated.

**Figure 4.5**  
**U.N. Peacekeeping Personnel Levels, 1947–2014**



SOURCE: Max Roser and Mohamed Nagdy, "Peacekeeping," Our World in Data, 2016.  
RAND RR1994-4.5

## Ability to Constrain Major War

Empirical evidence on the incidence of conflict offers a general portrait of stability and even long-term decline in interstate conflict or armed territorial aggression during the broad period of the order, stretching from 1945 to the present. Over the past few years, however, there has been some concerning evidence and some specific aggressive behavior (especially by Russia) that suggest the potential for these trends to be reversed. But it is too early to tell whether these recent signals are evidence of a significant departure from decades of limits on conflict.

Looking forward, we considered three indicators of the international order's continued ability to constrain major war. One is the health and effects of military alliances. Second, we looked at whether rising conflict could hit some sort of tipping point that would undermine global stability and ruin the order's constraining effect on war. Finally, we briefly assessed some rising sources of conflict and their relationship to the order.



### The Role of Alliances

The role of U.S. alliances is especially critical because they are such an important component of the order. Indeed, during much of the Cold War, the U.S.-led alliance system, or at least its security aspects, was seen as largely equivalent to the order.<sup>19</sup> Today, our assessment of Russian and Chinese perspectives indicates that leaders from these nations continue to see the order this way, which affects the order's legitimacy in their eyes. They are determined to weaken—and perhaps, in the long run, undermine—U.S. regional alliance systems that they view as directed against them. In this sense, the alliances that are part of the order have contradictory effects on conflict, helping to deter war but also provoking regional powers and engaging the United States in local disputes that have the potential to escalate.

General research on the effects of alliances on conflict has produced complex and ambiguous findings.<sup>20</sup> Many of the effects appear to be highly contingent, and the relationship between alliances in the context of the current liberal order—or the emerging security environment—could depend on many situation-specific variables. However, general studies appear to confirm the stabilizing effects of defensive alliances when they are used to equalize local power balances and undermine the potential for effective, rapid aggression. In particular, U.S. relationships with NATO, South Korea, and Japan appear to have helped reduce the risk of conflict, proliferation, and other destabilizing outcomes.

A key question related to whether alliances can continue to serve this role is the degree to which they can be kept relevant with-

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<sup>19</sup> G. John Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 5, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Jesse C. Johnson and Brett Ashley Leeds, "Defense Pacts: A Prescription for Peace?" *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 7, No. 1, January 2011; Matthew O. Jackson and Stephen M. Nei, "Networks of Military Alliances, Wars, and International Trade," unpublished manuscript, June 2015; Alastair Smith, "Alliance Formation and War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 39, 1995; Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997; Tongfi Kim, "Why Alliances Entangle but Seldom Entrap States," *Security Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, August 2011; Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008; and Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Winter 2009/2010.

out unnecessarily provoking other major powers. For example, can the United States retain its military relationship with Japan even as it works to restore a better relationship with China in a future order? Can the United States remain fully committed to NATO and find a new Euro-Atlantic bargain with Russia? If these balances can be effectively struck, the alliance component of the order ought to be able to continue to contribute to peace.

### **The Tipping Point—How Much Is Too Much?**

A second important question for the future of the order is whether there is a tipping point with regard to the degree or amount of conflict that would have a cascading effect. Since 1945, there has been a long series of interstate and intrastate conflicts, but never enough to cause the order to collapse. The standard for the future cannot be zero conflict or a constant trend toward zero, because that standard has not been necessary so far. How much divergence from stability can be accepted? Against what period are we baselining the judgment? In the case of conflict, which cases are unacceptable, and why? In what cases must the United States respond decisively? These are some of the most difficult questions in assessing the health of the order. How do we distinguish normal, and to some extent healthy, variation from the beginning of a more dramatic break from stability?

Neither history nor theory can offer a simple answer to such questions. There are too many variables involved, and too many nonlinear dynamics, to make easy determinations. Even historical examples sometimes only provide fodder for counterfactual debates. For example, the Balkan conflict could easily have sparked a wider NATO-Russian dispute had a few events broken differently.

One clue to a partial answer may come from analyzing the factors that cause a system to return to equilibrium. These are the variables that will determine whether a given violation sparks a cascade of instability or leads back to a stable equilibrium. In the realm of conflict, those variables could include such factors as

- degree to which the aggressor (leader or nation) is willing to put its security at risk with a rising ladder of provocations (that is, the aggressor's risk tolerance)

- degree to which the aggressor believes that fundamental interests, or deeply held ambitions, can be satisfied only with further aggression (related factor: degree to which the aggressor feels a sense of desperation, for economic or security reasons, that alters its risk tolerance or threat perception)
- level of punishment of the aggressive action (global condemnation, objective price the aggressor pays)
- degree to which the aggressor believes that the action was effective and served its purpose or was counterproductive (can be related to the level of punishment but is more dependent on perceptions).

The postwar order is designed, in part, to manipulate such factors—particularly the level of punishment for pursuing aggression—to create equilibrium in the overall system. We conclude that the order has done so with a significant degree of success since 1945. Some of the factors of equilibrium are out of the control of the leaders and institutions of order, but many factors remain subject to the effective use of the order's various mechanisms.

We debated whether to assemble a single indicator of the order's equilibrium related to conflict. Eventually, we decided that such an indicator would be more misleading than helpful. It would embrace numerous highly qualitative and nonlinear factors yet generate a single, seemingly objective result. The potential for false precision is extremely high. In our judgment, there can be no single, meaningfully accurate measure of the stability or equilibrium of the order's peace and stability. Constant reference to a wide range of indicators—the aggregative approach we have taken in this analysis—can give the best possible portrait of unfolding realities.

At the moment, we find significant support for the idea that the nonaggression norm remains robust and that no cascade of aggressive campaigns has begun. First, in several cases since 1989, the world community (or major components of it) has banded together to oppose outright aggression—for example, Iraq's attack on Kuwait in 1990 or Serbia's 1990s aggression in the Balkans. Second, in the most recent example of significant aggression—Russia's use of force against Ukraine in 2014—the West has applied powerful sanctions and worked to isolate Russia from key institutions, and these steps remain robust as of

this writing.<sup>21</sup> NATO has responded impressively, with new plans to enhance its major warfighting capabilities to deter further Russian aggression.<sup>22</sup> Third, states with some revisionist intent, such as China and Russia, appear intent on working below the threshold of major conflict, through such techniques as hybrid or gray-zone campaigns.<sup>23</sup> While these can have dangers of their own, they imply a recognition that classic, large-scale aggression is too costly to contemplate.

### Rising Sources of Conflict

A third set of factors likely to affect the order's health with regard to militarized conflict relates to the intersection of ambitions and norms in the global system. One has to do with the degree to which the order can accommodate the ambitions of leading powers. The other refers to the degree to which the norm of nonaggression is enforced.

One determinant of future levels of conflict will be the size of the gap between the status quo and the interests of rising powers. If that gap is large, then it will be difficult to accommodate states' goals within the existing order. One useful indicator of future conflict could be an assessment of where the gap is causing order-destabilizing events—for example, Russia's ambition to possess a regional buffer zone, which led to its aggression against Ukraine.

The larger question is how easy it will be for the order to adapt to the ambitions of leading powers. If it can adjust, then few nations will see a reason to undertake military action to promote such ambitions. For the moment, the answer to this question offers some source of reassurance—but also worry. The focus of the gap between aspirations and the order's allowed activities seems mostly on regional spheres of influence. This raises the difficult dilemma of choosing between accommodating the interests of ambitious and sometimes aggressive major powers and deterring belligerence when it does occur.

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<sup>21</sup> Edward Fishman, "We Built the Russia Sanctions to Last," *Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> See NATO, "Boosting NATO's Presence in the East and Southeast," March 15, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Press, December 2015.

This dilemma relates to the degree to which balancing behavior or norm-based punishment of aggression is strong enough to create an overall deterrent effect. The order is designed to sustain—and, at times, enforce—its core norms of conduct, such as trade reciprocity and nonaggression. Part of that task is to punish violators and establish the principle that departures from the order's norms will not benefit aggressive states. But it is extremely difficult to develop objective criteria to know when a punishment has been severe enough. This is especially so because, in some cases (e.g., the post-World War I treatment of Germany), efforts to punish so insult pride and status that they become counterproductive, helping to bring about the future conflict they were meant to deter.

A good case can be made that actions since the end of the Cold War have done a reasonably good job of establishing a clear price for violators of the nonaggression norm. Although it took some time, Europe and the United States eventually roused themselves to counter Serbian aggression in the Balkans in the 1990s, and the United States responded decisively to Saddam Hussein's aggression in Kuwait. North Korea has paid a high price for its repeated provocations. Most recently, the world community, and especially Europe and the United States, has imposed significant penalties on Russia for its actions in Ukraine. Again, whether these are sufficient is the subject of major debate—but compared with the responses to great-power regional adventurism in the past, for example, these penalties appear to reflect a significantly greater consensus on the importance of enforcing the norm. Russia has arguably been placed in a much less promising strategic situation as a result of the sanctions.

Making such assessments is very difficult, however, because of the intervening role of perceptions. Leaders of the order punish aggressors, in part, to send deterrent messages, both to the leaders of those aggressive states and to others looking for indications of future conduct. A relatively weak response could still create cascading perceptions that had the intended effect on future actions; an aggressor might disregard even a strong response, believing it to be an outlier, and it might therefore have little effect.

As difficult as they can be to evaluate, these factors bear close watching in the years ahead as indicators of the order's ability to constrain conflict. The following aspects should be regularly assessed:

- the seeming levels of dissatisfaction of major powers in their ability to sustain their interests and fulfill their national ambitions within the constraints of the order
- behavior by major powers in pursuing specific ambitions relative to the rules and norms of the order
- the degree of response to cases of aggression, as well as the aggressors' perceptions of those responses.

In sum, the three indicators discussed in this chapter do not provide decisive reasons to believe that the order's effect on conflict is set to change. U.S. alliance systems are likely to continue to forestall conflict in major theaters, but the risk of escalation seems likely to grow with the rising assertiveness of China and Russia and their growing willingness to challenge perceived norms of the order in their regions.

## Adherence to Liberal Norms and Values

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One distinguishing characteristic of the postwar international order is respect for liberal norms and values, generally including economic freedoms (such as open markets) and political norms (such as democratic political processes, human rights, and the rule of law). Measuring trends in these areas can offer a snapshot of the health of the order's liberal aspects.

In this chapter, we assess indicators in three areas that provide a means of measuring states' adherence to liberal norms and values: (1) democracy and liberal systems, (2) human rights, and (3) corruption and the rule of law. Thus, measures related to these areas focus on political facets of the order's liberal aspects; at the end of the chapter, we address economic facets (see also Chapter Three).

To a greater extent than the economic-related ones, the three political-related indicators seeking to measure adherence to liberal norms and values have certain weaknesses that are, in many cases, unavoidable. To examine the indicators, we use data from Polity IV, Transparency International, Freedom House, the Heritage Foundation, the World Bank, and the Fragile States Index. We do not present these data sets as perfect, precise measures, and the methodologies of individual data sets have their own weaknesses and limitations. Rather, our objective in this chapter is to explore overarching trends and patterns that relate to the order's liberal aspects.

*The most important finding from this group of indicators is that, while long-term trends indicate overall improvement, these norms and values have been backsliding in certain countries in recent years—and this backsliding may be accelerating.* Of note, Russia and Turkey have lost

ground in these indicators. And China, while rising economically, has not fully bought into many of these liberal aspects of the order; what this abstention means for the long-term health and strength of the order remains to be seen. In addition, many far-right parties in Europe have made gains over the past decade and have managed to push the political debate further to the right.

## Democracy and Liberal Systems

Democracy has been a key tenet of the liberal international order since 1945. Not all of the major powers conform—China and Russia are two notable examples—but, in large part, democracy and liberal political values have increased remarkably since 1945. Several indexes seek to measure and track democracy, freedom, and other liberal values (although the definitions of those terms are not always consistent); we drew especially from Polity IV and Freedom House, which track the strength of democratic political systems. While these data sets and indexes have methodological limitations, they can provide helpful overviews of global political trends.

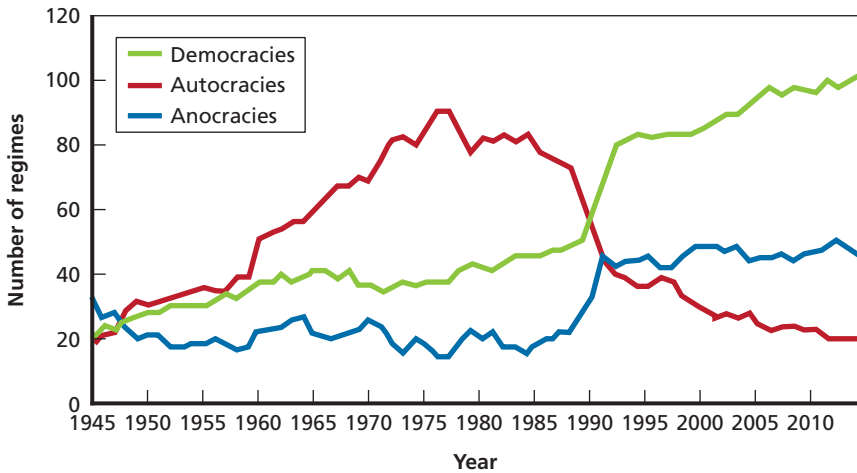
The Polity IV Regime Authority Characteristics and Transitions data sets provide annual assessments of type of regime authority in countries with populations greater than 500,000 from 1800 through 2015. Regimes are coded as autocracies, democracies, or anocracies (which fall between democracies and autocracies). From the perspective of the liberal aspects of the international order, long-term trends are positive, showing a steady increase in the number of democracies since 1945 and a significant drop in the number of autocracies since the mid-1970s. From 1948 to 1989, autocracies exceeded democracies; however, the number of autocracies peaked in 1977 and has fallen sharply in successive decades (Figure 5.1). With the end of the Cold War, democratic regimes multiplied, but gains have slowed in recent years. As Figure 5.1 shows, many autocratic regimes have been replaced by quasi-democratic ones instead of democracies, and some democracies have lost ground.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Systemic Peace, “The Polity Project,” web page, undated.



**Figure 5.1**  
**Democratic, Autocratic, and Anocratic Regimes, 1945–2014**



SOURCE: Center for Systemic Peace, undated.

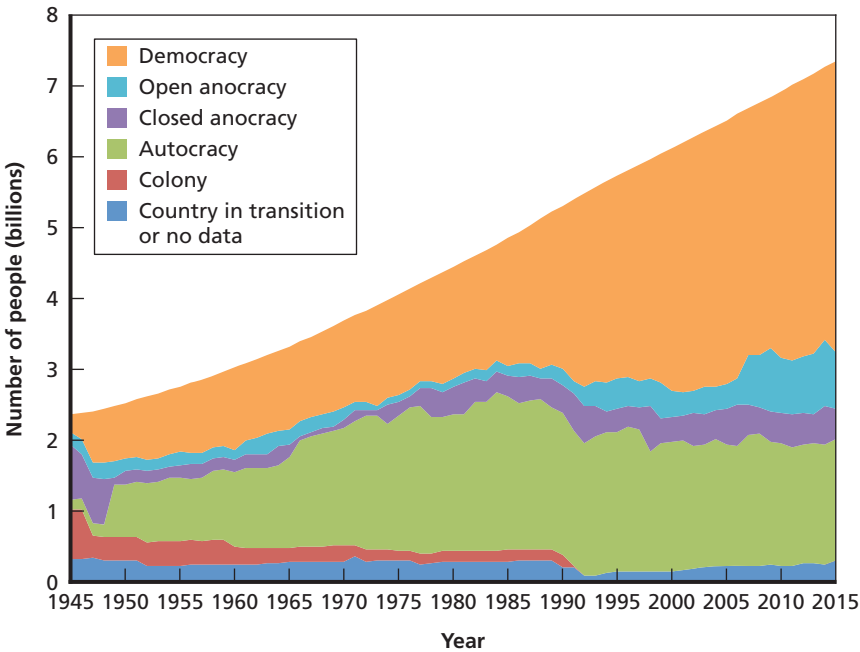
RAND RR1994-5.1

Furthermore, as shown in Figure 5.2, the number of people living under democratic regimes has steadily risen since 1945, whereas the number of people living in open anocracies, closed anocracies, autocracies, colonies, and countries in transition has remained relatively stable.

Overall, we have seen significant progress in political and democratic freedoms since 1945, but short-term trends show some backsliding. Freedom House produces a yearly report tracking both political and civil liberties. In 2015, 72 countries saw a net decline in freedom, and 105 countries have seen a net decline since 2005. Countries with a decline in their aggregate score have outnumbered those with increases every year for the past decade.<sup>2</sup> Since 2000, some countries—including Russia, Turkey, Poland, and Venezuela—have lost ground in the Freedom House rankings. As of 2017, only 45 percent of the world’s population is free, while 30 percent is partly free and 25 percent is not free,

<sup>2</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2016: Anxious Dictators, Wavering Democracies—Global Freedom Under Pressure*, Washington, D.C., 2016a, p. 3.

**Figure 5.2**  
**Number of People Living Under Different Types of Political Regimes, 1945–2015**



SOURCE: Max Roser, "Democracy," Our World in Data, 2016.

RAND RR1994-5.2

according to Freedom House's definitions.<sup>3</sup> This trend has led to stark conclusions, such as the claim by the historian Andrew Roberts that democracy as a political system "is on trial, and right now it's losing across huge swaths of Asia and Africa—losing out to the ideas of totalitarian state-directed corporatism that seems to be delivering much higher growth and much better leaders."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2017: Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy*, Washington, D.C., 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Roberts, "1776: Would You Like to Reconsider?" *Wall Street Journal*, October 28, 2016, p. A9.

As with many of these indicators, it is important to judge whether these emerging trends fall within the range of historical variation, especially if they represent seemingly dangerous reversals of positive trajectories associated with the liberal order. For example, some backsliding on democratic progress has occurred before, and it is to be expected in a system of more than 190 countries. Democracy has advanced in waves rather than as a consistent, linear process, and we could merely be witnessing a temporary slowdown before another wave of liberal advance. Crucially, the global status of democracy remains far better than it was as recently as the mid-1980s, and the recent negative trends—while concerning—reflect only a dip of a handful of percentage points in the proportion of countries counted as democratic. It is too early to know where the trend is headed, but for the time being, our assessment of the health of the order must take seriously the apparent strengthening of an illiberal bloc that is self-consciously trying to offer an alternative to liberal political and economic systems.

## Human Rights

Respect for human rights has become such an important liberal norm of the order that some states and international organizations have engaged in military interventions with the stated goal of protecting civilians in conflict and addressing human rights violations—although this practice, encapsulated in the *responsibility-to-protect* concept discussed later, remains controversial. For example, former U.S. President Barack Obama justified the 2011 intervention in Libya, in part, on the grounds of the regime's human rights violations and violence against civilians.<sup>5</sup> States' respect for human rights norms can be measured in a variety of ways. Respect for the laws of war and participation in human rights treaties both serve as potential indicators of the strength of human rights norms.

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<sup>5</sup> White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya," National Defense University, Washington, D.C., March 28, 2011.

The Fragile States Index includes an assessment of states' respect for human rights and the rule of law as part of its yearly report. The index includes measures that relate to press freedoms, civil liberties, political freedoms, human trafficking, political prisoners, incarceration, religious persecution, torture, and executions. The data point to stability or even slight improvement over the past decade in states' respect for human rights and the rule of law. Some case countries are outliers—for example, Germany has made notable gains, while Turkey has lost significant ground. But more recently, all case countries (except Germany and China) saw an overall decrease in indicators measuring respect for human rights and the rule of law from 2013 to 2015.<sup>6</sup>

Freedom of the press and access to information are essential both for ensuring strong democracies and for exposing human rights abuses (and are themselves, arguably, human rights). According to Freedom House's Freedom of the Press index, just 25 percent of presses were free and 55 percent were not free in 1985. Then, such freedoms were on the rise; in 1995, the percentage of presses that were free, partly free, and not free were roughly equal.<sup>7</sup> However, press freedoms have been slowly declining over the past 15 years. In 2002, 40 percent of countries were reported as having free presses, but by 2015, only 32 percent were. The percentage of countries with presses that are not free has remained relatively stable over this period, at around 33 percent (Figure 5.3).<sup>8</sup> Freedom House's 2015 Freedom on the Net index finds that "Internet freedom around the world has declined for the fifth consecutive year, with more governments censoring information of public interest and placing greater demands on the private sector to take down offending content."<sup>9</sup>

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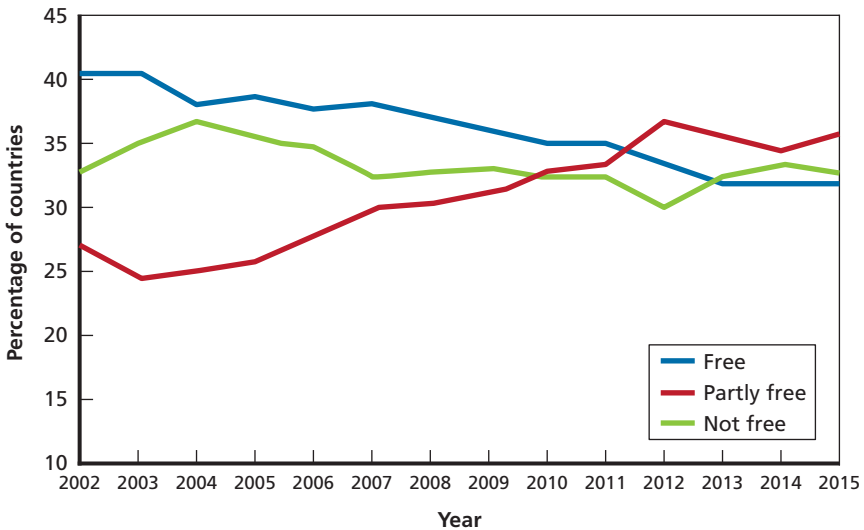
<sup>6</sup> Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index 2016*, Washington, D.C., undated.

<sup>7</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press 2016: The Battle for the Dominant Message*, Washington, D.C., April 2016b.

<sup>8</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press 2015: Harsh Laws and Violence Drive Global Decline*, Washington, D.C., April 2015a.

<sup>9</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom on the Net 2015: Privatizing Censorship, Eroding Privacy*, Washington, D.C., October 2015b, p. 1.

**Figure 5.3**  
**Freedom of the Press, 2002–2015**



SOURCE: Freedom House, 2015a.

RAND RR1994-5.3

On the whole, worldwide trends relating to human rights have improved since 1945. However, in recent years, there has been concerning retrenchment in freedom of the press and access to information.

## Corruption and the Rule of Law

Curbing corrupt behavior and strengthening the rule of law underpin the liberal aspects of the international order, bolstering both democratic and economic freedoms. Corruption is detrimental to economic freedoms because it weakens confidence in business and financial relationships, and it hurts political freedoms by undermining free, democratic political processes. Corruption can be a product of many variables, including a country's development level and its sociocultural traditions. Yet the postwar liberal order has upheld transparency and effective governance as key values, so a broad-based trend toward cor-

ruption would certainly reflect a worrisome factor in relation to the order's larger goals.

A variety of indexes seek to measure trends in these areas. We gathered data from Transparency International, the Heritage Foundation, and the World Bank that track corruption and anticorruption efforts around the world. However, there are some methodological challenges to measuring such efforts. We used data sets with differing methodologies to seek to balance their varying strengths and weaknesses. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index is the most-used indicator of corruption worldwide. The index uses a combination of surveys and assessments to capture perceptions of public-sector corruption because, as Transparency International argues, "There is no meaningful way to assess absolute levels of corruption in countries or territories on the basis of hard empirical data," such as the number of prosecutions or bribes reported.<sup>10</sup> The data indicate a slight increase in perceptions of corruption worldwide since 2000. Among leading powers, Germany, Japan, and the United States are consistently reported as being less corrupt, while corruption poses more of a challenge in Brazil, China, India, Russia, and Turkey (Figure 5.4).<sup>11</sup>

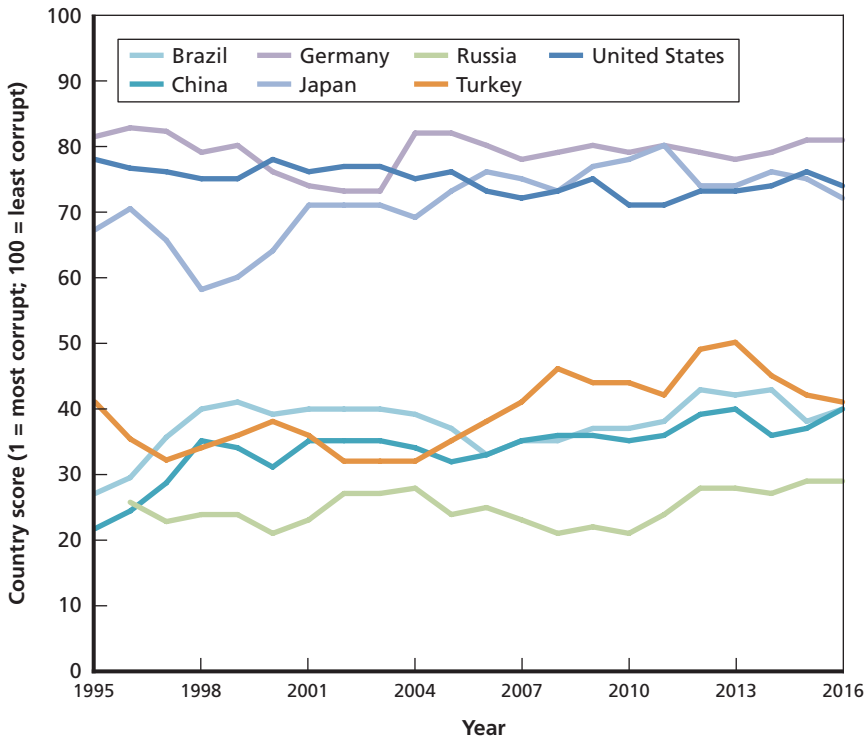
The Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom offers a measure of "freedom from corruption." The indicator pulls primarily from the Corruption Perceptions Index but complements that data with information from the U.S. Department of Commerce's *Country Commercial Guide*, the Economist Intelligence Unit's *Country Commerce* (2009–2012), the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative's *2012 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers*, and official government publications from case countries. The data show that global trends since 2006 have remained relatively stable, and, mirroring Transparency International's findings to some extent, there has been a slight increase in corruption over time (Figure 5.5). Germany, Japan, and the United States consistently rank among the less corrupt countries, and Brazil, China, and Russia rank as more corrupt. Turkey, while still on

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<sup>10</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2015: Frequently Asked Questions," 2015, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index," various years.

**Figure 5.4**  
**Corruption Perceptions Index Country Scores, 1995–2016**



SOURCE: Transparency International, various years.  
 NOTE: Data for Russia are not available until 1996.

RAND RR1994-5.4

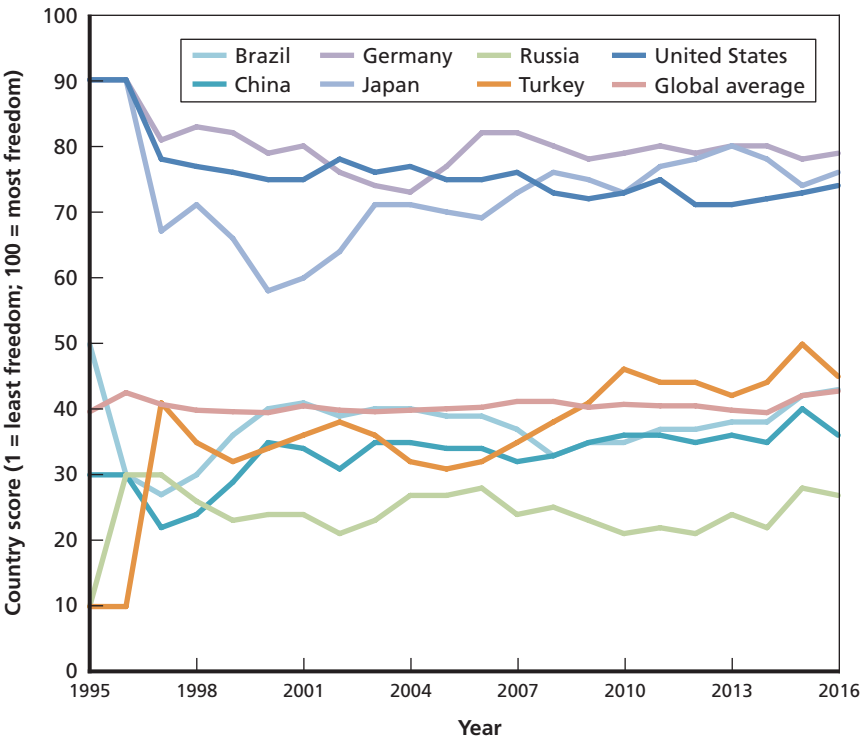
the higher end of the spectrum, had improved from 2006 to 2015 but again lost ground in 2016.<sup>12</sup> According to the 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index report, corruption had worsened in Turkey since 2012.<sup>13</sup>

Limiting corruption and strengthening the rule of law help underpin the liberal international order by supporting political and economic freedoms. As noted, there are serious methodological chal-

<sup>12</sup> Terry Miller and Anthony B. Kim, *2016 Index of Economic Freedom: Promoting Economic Opportunity and Prosperity*, Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2015*, Berlin, 2016.

**Figure 5.5**  
**Freedom from Corruption Country Scores, 1995–2016**



SOURCE: Heritage Foundation, "Freedom from Corruption Index (0–100)," 2016.

RAND RR1994-5.5

lenges to measuring corruption worldwide. For example, the Corruption Perceptions Index has been criticized for having a bias toward perceptions of the elite and for failing to capture the impact of corruption on a country's citizens.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, these indexes provide a means of approximating worldwide and country-specific trends in corruption and anticorruption efforts. Individual countries' rankings and assessment vary by year, but global trends point to a slight increase in corruption.

<sup>14</sup> Alex Cobham, "Corrupting Perceptions," *Foreign Policy*, July 22, 2013.



## Economic Growth and Democratic Stability

The future of democratic and liberal values in the order depends on many variables, but our research points to one especially important causal connection: the relationship between steady economic growth and democratic systems. In Chapter Three, we discussed the ways in which global economic integration has been a foundational component of a shared order and how important international economic institutions are to the order's stability. Those same factors turn out to be centrally related to the future of liberal norms in the order.

Discussion of the health of the world's democracies and the future of liberal values must therefore be considered alongside a non-traditional indicator of the order's strength: the economic growth rate of democracies, especially of what are often called *consolidated democracies*. This category includes democracies that have established a stable precedent of peaceful power transfer over several electoral cycles. The world's leading consolidated democracies—including the United States, the nations in the EU, Japan, and other large liberal democracies—have seen rates of economic growth consistently and persistently decline over the past 40 years. Those growth rates may be beginning to recover, but this history still raises a troubling question for a stable international order built around those democracies: Could poor economic performance shake the foundations of their stability or their commitment to the order?

There is clear evidence that negative and declining economic growth leads to increased political volatility, including in democracies and in rich nations. Various studies have found a relationship between strong economic performance and the electoral survival of incumbent governments for both high-income countries and developing countries.<sup>15</sup> Other analyses suggest that global economic crises in European democracies generally increase electoral volatility and party fragmenta-

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<sup>15</sup> On high-income countries, see Alberto Alesina, Nouriel Roubini, and Gerald D. Cohen, *Political Cycles and the Macroeconomy*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997. On developing countries, see Alexander Pacek and Benjamin Radcliff, "The Political Economy of Competitive Elections in the Developing World," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 1995.

tion. Work by Fernando Casal Bertoa compares elections before and after several global economic crises in European democracies and finds that the crises generally increase electoral volatility and party fragmentation. This includes the 2008 financial crisis, where Casal Bertoa finds volatility and fragmentation to have risen in 80 percent of Western European countries.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, those trends are empirically linked to declining support for the elements of international order. High rates of political volatility are negatively correlated with international cooperation in such areas as respect for trade agreements and declining support for peacekeeping.<sup>17</sup> Changes in the institutional structure of a state's political system, which can emerge in periods of volatile political conditions, correlate with the collapse of alliances.<sup>18</sup> Declining economic growth is associated with increased hostility to immigrants and an increase in civic violence toward them.<sup>19</sup> In more-severe cases, political instability and civic violence are associated with an increase in state repression.<sup>20</sup>

The natural culmination point of these worrying trends would be a link between negative economic growth and the reversion of

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<sup>16</sup> Fernando Casal Bertoa, "Seismic Wave or Tsunami? Assessing Party System Change in Times of Crisis," *European Consortium for Political Research Conference*, Vol. 6, Glasgow, UK, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> On respect for trade agreements, see Julia Gray and Jeff Kucik, "Leadership Turnover and the Implementation of International Economic Agreements," working paper, University of Pennsylvania, 2016. On declining support for peacekeeping, see Atsushi Tago, "Too Many Problems at Home to Help You: Domestic Disincentives for Military Coalition Participation," *International Area Studies Review*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Brett Ashley Leeds and Burcu Savun, "Terminating Alliances: Why Do States Abrogate Agreements?" *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 4, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Rafaela M. Dancygier, *Immigration and Conflict in Europe*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010; and Armin Falk, Andreas Kuhn, and Josef Zweimüller, "Unemployment and Right-Wing Extremist Crime," *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, Vol. 113, No. 2, 2011. For a broader review of evidence, see Rafaela M. Dancygier and David D. Laitin, "Immigration into Europe: Economic Discrimination, Violence, and Public Policy," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 17, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Sabine C. Carey, "The Dynamic Relationship Between Protest and Repression," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1, 2006.

democracies to autocratic regimes. This link is almost indisputable in low- and middle-income democracies,<sup>21</sup> with some studies finding it to be the *only* strong correlate to authoritarian reversion.<sup>22</sup> This would be worrisome from the standpoint of the order because other empirical evidence suggests that autocratic nations are more likely to violate international norms, break alliances, and initiate military conflicts.

Prior research and data from the post–World War II global era offered a significant reassurance on this score: Rich, consolidated democracies have no history of authoritarian reversion. But recent global events are calling this assumption into question. For example, Turkey’s recent trajectory—with widespread, antidemocratic purges of opposition influences and constitutional changes to allow a president to retain personal power indefinitely—offers a worrisome precedent because the nation’s per-capita income of U.S. \$10,975 shatters the previous record of per-capita income for an authoritarian reversion. In Europe, the leaders of the ruling Fidesz party in Hungary have instituted extreme changes to the electoral system that severely weakened the independence of the judiciary, removed personnel control from future governments, and drastically changed the electoral system to favor minority rule.<sup>23</sup>

The outcome of these trends cannot be known. As with many indicators, it is too early to tell whether they will eventually level out and be viewed as still within historical degrees of variation in a relatively stable long-term order. And recent signals point to a slow recovery of growth levels in the United States and Europe—at least at the

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<sup>21</sup> Mark J. Gasiorowski, “Economic Crisis and Political Regime Change: An Event History Analysis,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 4, 1995; and Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Milan Svolik, “Authoritarian Reversals and Democratic Consolidation,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 102, No. 2, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> For a review of the Fidesz government’s actions through 2012, see Miklos Bankuti, Gabor Halmai, and Kim Lane Scheppele, “Disabling the Constitution,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 23, No. 3, July 2012.

time of writing. But there is reason to be concerned that long-term economic stagnation will threaten the stability of the order in multiple ways. This emphasizes even more the importance of the economic elements of the order as its essential foundation.

## Major-Power Signaling and Policies Toward Order

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An important indicator of the health of any international order is the messaging about it from the governments, officials, national leaders, and top scholars of the major powers. If the signaling—in official documents, speeches, articles, informal remarks, and policies toward elements of the order—is encouraging and positive, it can create a general sense that an order is widely supported and stable. Negative signaling and policy directions could suggest that a country is considering behavior that runs counter to a rule or norm of the order.

In this chapter, we examine four critical actors—Russia, China, India, and Brazil—in terms of their signaling about order, partly through their national policies.<sup>1</sup> The data for this analysis comprised discrete and ad hoc statements by individual leaders, the evolving official policy positions of governments, and specific policies that signal a posture toward the order. If signaling is off the cuff and easy to reverse, then it does not reflect a meaningful indicator of the evolving health of an order. Therefore, our research in this area focused on signaling that reflected lasting views of the order that are matched by and grounded in policy actions. Signaling is a product not merely of words but of behavior—and for each country examined in this chapter, we consider both policies toward elements of the order and official and leadership statements about it. In each case, we gathered a sense of the current government's posture toward the order, the relationship of the current

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter does not reflect a comprehensive assessment of these countries' current and future approaches to the postwar order. A separate report in this project examines Russia's policies (Radin and Reach, 2017) and another will examine China's.

order to the country's national identity and ambitions, and the state of the domestic debate—to the extent one exists—about the order.

The results are distinct from what we discuss in Chapter Seven on public attitudes toward elements of the order. For this chapter and its related indexes, we considered official and expert-community views of the order, senior leader statements and speeches, and the positions of official national security documents. The index for public attitudes refers to views among the broader publics of these countries.

The results of our survey of major-power signaling about the order suggest a somewhat complex picture. *Most states remain broadly supportive of the order—some, especially traditional U.S. allies, very much so. At the same time, demands for reform and expressions of dissatisfaction at the U.S. dominance of the order have become commonplace, as well as increasingly urgent and pointed.* If there is a single message from major-power signaling, it is that, for the order to be sustainable, it will have to become more shared and pluralistic. Frustration at being part of an order whose rules, norms, and institutions are set by others is growing, and the order is not likely to survive as a coherent system if it does not respond to the demand for participation. Indeed, there is significant evidence that among aspiring great powers (China and Russia in particular) and rising regional or major powers (including Brazil, India, and Turkey), the degree of dissatisfaction with the rules and operation of the existing order is reaching a tipping point. This transitional moment may be arriving faster than most observers have expected.

In this evaluation, we did not examine U.S. signaling about the order. That was partly because, across many Republican and Democratic administrations, U.S. signaling had been remarkably consistent, within boundaries. During the George W. Bush administration, some degree of that consistency was lost as the United States unilaterally abrogated several major treaties and agreements (such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Kyoto climate accord) and undertook worldwide military operations without a formal U.N. mandate. Other policies of that administration—on trade, support for allies, and much more—continued to endorse elements of the postwar order, however. If the United States were to shift to a much more nationalistic, hostile attitude toward the rules, norms, and institutions of the order, the

results would be unpredictable and could be dramatic. The very survival of a recognizable international order would be in jeopardy.

## Russia

Russian officials and analysts have increasingly expressed concern and frustration with the international order. They identify the current international order as dominated by the United States and believe that U.S. dominance is a threat to Russian security and interests. While Russian officials and analysts are deeply concerned with the logic of the current international order, they continue to recognize the potential for cooperation in certain areas of mutual interest.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has expressed consistent concern with the development of the international order, especially with what he sees as the growing, unconstrained behavior of the United States. In a speech at the Munich Security Council in 2007, Putin stated, “we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force—military force—in international relations,” observing that the United States “has overstepped its national borders in every way.”<sup>2</sup> The rhetoric intensified in 2014 following the events in Ukraine. In a speech in March 2014, Putin criticized the West for its support of the Maidan revolution that deposed Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych, explaining that the West “must have really lacked political instinct and common sense not to foresee all the consequences of their actions. Russia found itself in a position it could not retreat from. If you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard.”<sup>3</sup> In his speech at the Valdai International Discussion Club in 2014, Putin observed,

Instead of establishing a new balance of power, essential for maintaining order and stability, [the United States] took steps that

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<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Putin’s Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy,” February 12, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Address by President of the Russian Federation,” speech delivered at the Kremlin, March 18, 2014a.

threw the system into sharp and deep imbalance. . . . Pardon the analogy, but this is the way nouveaux riches behave when they suddenly end up with a great fortune, in this case, in the shape of world leadership and domination. Instead of managing their wealth wisely, for their own benefit too of course, I think they have committed many follies.<sup>4</sup>

Other Russian leaders and analysts similarly highlight the challenges to Russian interests of the current international order. In a March 2016 article, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov wrote, “We see how the United States and the U.S.-led Western alliance are trying to preserve their dominant positions by any available method or, to use the American lexicon, ensure their ‘global leadership.’”<sup>5</sup> Russian analyst Alexander Lukin in 2016 described a Western philosophy of “‘democratism,’ a one-sided mixture of political liberalism, human-rights thinking, Enlightenment secularism and theories of Western supremacy that strongly resembled colonialism,” which he argued undergirded the West’s foreign policy and explained Western efforts to gain domination over the world.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, another prominent Russian analyst, Fyodor Lukyanov, identified an attempt by the United States to create “‘a new world order’ in which Western countries had not only a political but also a moral right to organize the world as they saw fit.”<sup>7</sup>

Russian officials and analysts are especially concerned about elements of the U.S.-led order that interfere with or threaten Russia’s domestic security and regional influence. Russia has retained an interest in maintaining a strong degree of influence within its “near abroad” (usually characterized as the former Soviet states minus the Baltics). Indeed, analysts point to an “imperial” Russian identity, according to

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<sup>4</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club,” Sochi, Russia: Valdai Discussion Club, October 24, 2014b.

<sup>5</sup> Sergey Lavrov, “Russia’s Foreign Policy: Historical Background,” Moscow, March 3, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Lukin, “Russia in a Post-Bipolar World,” *Survival*, Vol. 58, No. 1, February–March 2016, p. 94.

<sup>7</sup> Fyodor Lukyanov, “The Lost Twenty-Five Years,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, February 28, 2016.



which Russia views its interests as extending beyond its territory.<sup>8</sup> This idea is also gaining support among Russian elites.<sup>9</sup> Russia thus interprets plans by the EU and NATO to expand to former Soviet republics (such as Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova) to be highly threatening. Russia thus interprets its own activities in Ukraine as a response to perceived Western support for the Maidan revolution. Russian officials believe that the United States and its allies have engineered “color revolutions” (that is, pro-democracy protests that have often led to changes in government) in the region that could also occur in Russia; furthermore, they believe that U.S. military operations in Kosovo, Iraq, and Libya indicate that future military action by the United States may not be constrained by the U.N.<sup>10</sup> Highlighting concerns about foreign-inspired protests, Russia has tightened control over foreign media and other information sources and has cracked down on “undesirable” foreign-backed organizations.<sup>11</sup>

While voicing concerns about Western influence and the enlargement of Western institutions, Russia simultaneously emphasizes its desire for cooperation with the West, albeit only in certain areas and on its own terms. This attitude has been reflected in several policy stances. For instance, Russia has sought recognition as an “equal” partner, meaning that Russian prerogatives as a great power should be recognized.<sup>12</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, for example, Russian officials have proposed the creation of a pan-European security organization that would include all European countries—and over whose

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<sup>8</sup> Igor Zevelev, *NATO's Enlargement and Russian Perceptions of Eurasian Political Frontiers*, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany: George Marshall European Center for Security Studies, undated, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Hamilton College Levitt Poll, “Russian Elite 2016 Survey: Perspectives on Foreign and Domestic Policy,” May 11, 2016, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> Radin and Reach, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> “Russia Targets ‘Undesirable’ Foreign Organisations,” BBC, May 15, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Lavrov notes, “We are not seeking confrontation with the United States, or the European Union, or NATO. On the contrary, Russia is open to the widest possible cooperation with its Western partners” (Sergey Lavrov, “Speech at the 46th Munich Security Conference,” February 6, 2010). He clarifies that cooperation would be on Russian terms of a “universal feeling of equality and equally guaranteed security.”

decisions Russia would have a veto.<sup>13</sup> Russia remains committed to the U.N., in part, because Russia's veto on the Security Council grants it special status and enables it to protect core interests.<sup>14</sup> On economic issues, Russia has sought membership in the WTO and continued opportunities for trade and investment with the West, including in the critically important oil and gas sector. Indeed, there remains a belief among a substantial number of elites that closer economic integration and cooperation with the West is essential to Russia's future development.<sup>15</sup>

It is clear that Russian leaders are deeply concerned about the development of the U.S.-led order and fear that the expansion of the order threatens their security and influence within their region. Nevertheless, Russian officials have not abandoned the prospects for cooperation with the West. They seek continued cooperation in areas where Russia and Western interests align, including the U.N. and trade, while simultaneously seeking a revision of the order to reflect Russia's core interests in its near abroad. The key question for the United States and the West will be how to prioritize Western goals for the order—including commitments to the enlargement of the EU and NATO and to democracy promotion—and whether it is feasible to recognize Russia's desire for exclusive influence within its own region.

## China

In a September 2015 speech to the U.N. General Assembly, China's President Xi Jinping said, "We cannot realize the Chinese dream without a peaceful international environment, a stable international order

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Weitz, *The Rise and Fall of Medvedev's European Security Treaty*, Washington, D.C.: German Marshall Fund of the United States, May 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Vladimir Putin, "Russia and the Changing World," RT News, February 27, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Kuchins and Igor Zevelev, "Russian Foreign Policy: Continuity in Change," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Winter 2012.

and the understanding, support, and help from the rest of the world.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, since China resumed normal relations with the United States and began a series of economic reforms in the 1970s, China has become increasingly integrated into the institutions of the international order, including the WTO, which it joined in 2001. Yet this has not stopped U.S. analysts from hand-wringing over whether China will continue to uphold the order’s existing institutions and values as its economy and military capabilities grow. What do the Chinese say about the international order and their country’s participation in it?

The short answer is that China supports the international institutions but contests the Western liberal democratic value system and the U.S. system of military alliances that undergird the “U.S.-led world order.”<sup>17</sup> Since the early 2000s, China has articulated a list of three core interests, which include preserving China’s “basic state system and national security,” protecting “national sovereignty and territorial integrity,” and maintaining international conditions for China’s continued “stable social and economic development.”<sup>18</sup> Understanding these three interests helps shed light on China’s stance toward the different components of the U.S.-led order. Most important, it explains why China supports any norms that will preserve control for the Chinese Communist Party and opposes any norms that might threaten that control.

For example, China is a major supporter of the sovereignty norm; in particular, China is extremely sensitive about its own sovereignty and territorial issues in Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, and the South China

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<sup>16</sup> Xi Jinping, “Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-Win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind,” speech at the General Debate of the 70th Session of the U.N. General Assembly, New York, September 28, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Fu Ying, “Putting the Order(s) Shift in Perspective,” *China–U.S. Focus*, February 15, 2016. For other sources on China’s broad approach to the international order, see Yong Deng, “The Post-Responsible Power,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4, Winter 2015; Gregory Chin and Ramesh Thakur, “Will China Change the Rules of Global Order?” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 4, October 2010; and Andrew J. Nathan, “China’s Rise and International Regimes: Does China Seek to Overthrow Global Norms?” in Robert S. Ross and Jo Inge Bekkevold, eds., *China in the Era of Xi Jinping: Domestic and Foreign Policy Challenges*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Closing Remarks for U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue,” Washington, D.C., July 28, 2009.

Sea. At the same time, China is an opponent of foreign intervention, democracy and human rights promotion, and freedom of information—all of which are ways in which foreign countries might influence the Chinese public to question or undermine authoritarian rule in China. President Xi summarized this view during his September 2015 speech to the U.N. General Assembly:

The principle of sovereignty not only means that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries are inviolable and their internal affairs are not subjected to interference. It also means that all countries' right to independently choose social systems and development paths should be upheld, and that all countries' endeavors to promote economic and social development and improve their people's lives should be respected.<sup>19</sup>

Because the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party rests largely on continued economic growth, China's foreign policy is also focused on maintaining the international conditions for that economic improvement. In the past, this meant joining international economic institutions and reassuring neighbors about China's "peaceful rise" and "peaceful development" while avoiding confrontations with them over competing territorial claims.<sup>20</sup> Although many Chinese officials and academics still perceive China as a developing country, they also believe that the world is becoming more "multipolar" as emerging markets and developing countries rise and shift the distribution of global power.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Chinese leaders seek influence in international institutions that they see as appropriately acknowledging China's growing power.

Accordingly, these leaders support institutions, such as the U.N. and informal economic groupings, that already grant China such influence. Indeed, China has played a largely constructive role—and increasingly so over time—in two key issues of global governance: non-

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<sup>19</sup> Xi, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Zheng Bijian, "China's 'Peaceful Rise' to Great-Power Status," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2005; and Information Office of the State Council, People's Republic of China, "China's Peaceful Development," September 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Xi, 2015.

proliferation and climate change. Over the past several decades, for example, a somewhat hands-off and skeptical attitude toward Western nonproliferation efforts has given way to greater support for the NPT and noncoercive nonproliferation.<sup>22</sup> On environmental issues, China's policies have long been constrained by a strong emphasis on maintaining independent sovereign control. Its own domestic environmental practices remain highly uneven at best. Nonetheless, it has been an increasingly vocal supporter of sustainable energy and international climate accords, leading up to its early ratification of the recent Paris climate agreement.<sup>23</sup>

In institutions where the Chinese have less influence, however, they seek reform. For example, for many years, China petitioned for the Chinese currency, the renminbi, to be included as one of the international reserve currencies included in the IMF's Special Drawing Right. In 2016, China became the first country to have its currency added to the list in 15 years after the IMF determined that the renminbi fit its criteria.<sup>24</sup> Where institutional reform in line with China's interests has not been forthcoming or has seemed unlikely, China has begun building revised, up-to-date international economic institutions in which it has a leading role.<sup>25</sup> This is particularly true within its immediate geographic region, where China has initiated a few regional organizations, including the security-oriented Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the economically oriented Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. It is not necessarily true that these developments are disadvantageous to the United States. In fact, ever since former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick urged China to become a "responsible stake-

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<sup>22</sup> Katherine Combes, "Between Revisionism and Status Quo: China in International Regimes," *POLIS Journal*, Vol. 6, Winter 2011–2012.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Landler and Jane Perlez, "Rare Harmony as China and U.S. Commit to Climate Deal," *New York Times*, September 3, 2016. See also Barbara Finamore, Sam Geall, Angel Hsu, and Joanna Lewis, "Beijing Is Finally Getting Serious About Climate Change," *Foreign Policy*, July 11, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> IMF, "IMF Survey: Chinese Renminbi to Be Included in IMF's Special Drawing Right Basket," December 1, 2015. See also David Francis, "IMF Officially Gives China Seat at the Adult Table of World Economics," *Foreign Policy*, October 3, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> McDowell, 2015.

holder” in 2005,<sup>26</sup> the United States has encouraged China to take on greater responsibility to provide public goods instead of merely “free riding.” Chinese leaders argue that the One Belt, One Road and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank initiatives are attempts to provide such public goods.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, since about 2010, China has contributed more peace-keeping troops to the U.N. than any other U.N. Security Council member. In 2016, China had more than 2,600 peacekeepers deployed on 111 total missions and was contributing more than 10 percent of the U.N.’s peacekeeping budget. Reports circulated that Beijing was anxious to have a Chinese official take over the Department of Peace-keeping Operations at the U.N., although China had not made an official request as of this writing.<sup>28</sup>

What has most concerned the United States and its regional allies and partners, however, are China’s recent attempts to contest the security order in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly following Xi’s rise to power in 2012. Since then, in what many observers regard as a break with previous policy, China has aggressively pursued its maritime territorial claims by resisting attempts to handle disputes through multilateral legal and consultative processes and engaging in reclamation and militarization of disputed claims in the South China Sea. In addition, China has vocally decried U.S. alliances in the region as part of a concerted effort to “contain” China.<sup>29</sup>

In sum, China supports the international institutions of the international order but contests the aspects of the order that are U.S.-dominated, which it believes are structured to reinforce U.S. power and limit the growth of China’s power. Observers can expect China to continue participating in the U.N. and WTO and cooperating on

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<sup>26</sup> Robert B. Zoellick, “Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?” National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, September 21, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Fu, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Clum Lynch, “China Eyes Ending Western Grip on Top UN Jobs with Greater Control over Blue Helmets,” *Foreign Policy*, October 2, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> For a good discussion of the containment question, see Shannon Tiezzi, “Yes, the US Does Want to Contain China (Sort Of),” *Diplomat*, August 8, 2015.

practical issues of global concern while contesting liberal democratic norms and U.S. regional military alliances that could affect China's core interests.

## India

Despite its status as an emerging great power, perhaps ultimately standing alongside the United States and China as one of three dominant powers in world politics, India's engagement with and leadership role in the international order remains much more constrained than that of even secondary powers. This is partly a legacy of its status as a poor developing state and its concept of nonalignment, which has encouraged largely noninterventionist foreign policies. But it is also a hallmark of the Indian style of foreign policy, which, until it changes, will not leave major room for a leading role in the order.<sup>30</sup> In broad terms, India's signaling about the international order is supportive, confined to a few key issues (such as development), and relatively quiet.

India has been trying to resolve a clash between its nonaligned traditions and its emerging role as global leader. As C. Raja Mohan puts it, "India's capacity to respond to the issues relative to the commons is constrained by an unresolved tension between the inertia of its policy positions framed during the early years of building the post-colonial state and the logic of its emerging major power status."<sup>31</sup> India's behavior in the WTO, for example, has been significantly affected—and constrained—by this tension and by its continuing effort to promote developing-country interests (and protect its own critical agricultural sector from competition).<sup>32</sup> To be sure, India is under domestic and

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<sup>30</sup> On India's role in the postwar order, see Ted Piccone, *Five Rising Democracies and the Fate of the International Liberal Order*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2016, pp. 71–96.

<sup>31</sup> C. Raja Mohan, "Rising India: Partner in Shaping the Global Commons?" *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3, July 2010, p. 139.

<sup>32</sup> Amrita Narlikar, "Reforming Institutions, Unreformed India?" in Alan S. Alexandroff and Andrew F. Cooper, eds., *Rising States, Rising Institutions: Challenges for Global Governance*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010.

international pressure to have a greater role in shaping the order and understands that it has growing claims on international influence. It has undergone a significant evolution in recent years from a more doctrinaire loudspeaker for developing-nation and nonaligned perspectives to a more nuanced and compromise-oriented global leader.

India's approach to the order, and resulting public signaling, is characterized by five major themes. First, India, along with Brazil and some other regional powers, places a strong emphasis on the U.N. as the centerpiece of the international system. In the international order, these states wish to see fewer exceptions granted to the self-declared hegemon, the United States, and want greater emphasis on the formal U.N. rules and institutions.<sup>33</sup>

Second, India has not been satisfied with the current structure of the U.N. system. As perhaps the world's most important emerging great power not accorded a permanent Security Council seat, India is a leading advocate of council reform, working with Germany, Brazil, and Japan in the Group of 4 (G-4) to promote wider Security Council membership. With other institutions, including even the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the G-8, India favors a reform and change process designed to make those institutions more representative. Partly as a result of this sense of required reform, India has been willing to participate in creating new institutions that parallel existing ones and arguably threaten to weaken the current institutional basis of the order.

Third, India has participated in a somewhat broader set of institutions within the order—beyond the U.N. and the dominant international economic institutions, such as the IMF and Asian Development Bank. India contributes its top diplomatic personnel and significant resources to these venues. Yet it does not necessarily see a need to promote consensus at the WTO for the sake of action, and it has advocated developing-nation interests there.<sup>34</sup> It has had significant engagement

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<sup>33</sup> Michael J. Boyle, "The Coming Illiberal Order," *Survival*, Vol. 58, No. 2, April–May 2016, p. 43.

<sup>34</sup> Teresita C. Schaffer, "The United States, India, and Global Governance: Can They Work Together?" *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3, July 2009, pp. 73, 75–76.



in the various informal coalitions of the order, from the India-Brazil-South Africa group to the BRICS states to the G-20. India has also been invited to participate in G-8 meetings as a nonmember or “out-reach country,” and it participates in this way along with Brazil, China, Mexico, South Africa, and others.

In another example of its engagement with global institutions and processes, India has become a major participant in peacekeeping operations; in fact, it is one of the three leading global contributors to such operations.<sup>35</sup> And India has established a Development and Economic Assistance budget designed to provide more than \$8 billion in foreign development assistance. It does not yet have a foreign aid agency, however, and its aid-giving remains somewhat ad hoc.<sup>36</sup> It is less supportive of conditional aid than the United States is.

On emerging issues, recent comments by senior Indian officials suggest a growing recognition of the need to contribute to the institutions of the order.<sup>37</sup> On climate, for example, the trajectory of India’s participation in global meetings since 2007 has been toward more active and constructive agreement to various initiatives. India continues to state its belief that developed countries must take the lead, but this viewpoint is not obstructing India’s participation on the issue as much as it did in the past. Indeed, in October 2016, India indicated its intention to accede to the Paris climate deal, before many developed nations had formally assented (including Japan, South Korea, and the EU).

Fourth, like China, India has made national sovereignty a major focus of its signaling about world order. Its foreign policy is more about autonomy than responsibility, more about resisting Western pressure than imposing its own. This is changing on some limited issues, however, such as climate change and nonproliferation. In recent climate summits, India has taken a more forward-looking approach to the need for reform as opposed to merely defending the right of developing

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<sup>35</sup> Schaffer, 2009, p. 74.

<sup>36</sup> Oliver P. Richmond and Ioannis Tellidis, “Emerging Actors in International Peacebuilding and Statebuilding: Status Quo or Critical States?” *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, Vol. 20, No. 4, October–December 2014, p. 573.

<sup>37</sup> Mohan, 2010, p. 138.

countries to continue growing. India took an important step in 2014, when it respected a decision by the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea that went against India's territorial claims versus Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi "calmly accepted the July 2014 decision rather than inciting xenophobic popular protests against alleged foreign unfairness. Modi emphasized that the arbitration, by putting hoary divisive issues behind the parties, had established the basis for future cooperation."<sup>38</sup>

Fifth, India's signaling on the international order has generally placed less emphasis on human rights than the United States or other Western powers have. Indeed, India appears to have a different understanding of key terms, such as *sovereignty* and *self-determination*. Grounded in its history of anticolonialism and self-determination, India's approach reflects a more classical view of national independence and a suspicion of global norms. As a result, it has been less supportive of the responsibility-to-protect principle; it abstained on the U.N. vote on the Libya operation, and then—Prime Minister Manmohan Singh criticized the action as a form of aggression. At the time, the United States condemned both India and Brazil for their opposition.<sup>39</sup>

In sum, then, India has been a significant proponent of many elements of the international order, although its particular history emerging from colonialism and leadership of the nonaligned movement gives it a special perspective and a unique commitment to reform. It has become deeply involved in some global forums and specific international endeavors, such as peacekeeping. Over time, as India has emerged from doctrinaire nonaligned theories to a more pragmatic stance as a global leader, its signaling about the order has become broadly more supportive. Whereas India once may have been on the road to becoming a more revisionist power relative to the current order, it has become an advocate of gradual reform and of strengthening many elements of the current order. Over the long term, however, India will still press

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<sup>38</sup> Jerome A. Cohen, "Forecasting the Aftermath of a Ruling on China's Nine-Dash Line," *Foreign Policy*, April 20, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Ramesh Thakur, "R2P After Libya and Syria: Engaging Emerging Powers," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Spring 2013, p. 71.

for significant reform of key institutions, especially the U.N. Security Council, and its support for key elements of the order is not guaranteed.

## Brazil

Like India, Brazil has engaged in generally supportive signaling about the postwar international order.<sup>40</sup> Also like India, Brazil has, at times, flirted with the decision to become a more revisionist and oppositional power relative to the order. But in general, although it participates even more at the margins than India does, Brazil has sought gradual reform and the status that comes from institutional membership rather than disruption. Simply put, “Brazil does not want to upend the power table; it wants a better seat and to be able to rewrite parts of the menu to its advantage.”<sup>41</sup>

Brazil desires a significant global and regional role, a strategic posture evident in its various initiatives to demonstrate leadership—in such areas as supporting nonproliferation, hosting the Olympics, and seeking Security Council membership. Already elected as a nonpermanent member of the U.N. Security Council, Brazil has been active in the G-4 countries (with Germany, India, and Japan), working together to expand Security Council membership. The United States has indicated support for Brazil’s efforts in this regard.<sup>42</sup> At the moment, Brazil continues to see active participation in the order as an avenue toward, rather than a barrier to, achieving these goals.

Brazil participates in the international system in several ways. It is a member of the G-20, and it has been involved with the IMF, where recent reforms have assigned it slightly greater voting rights. In both development and peacekeeping, Brazil has been deeply engaged with institutions of the international order. It has played a role in the G-7, U.N. agencies dealing with health issues, the World Health Organiza-

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<sup>40</sup> For a good summary of Brazil’s participation in the order, see Piccone, 2016, pp. 97–128.

<sup>41</sup> Esther D. Brimmer, “Is Brazil a Responsible Stakeholder or a Naysayer?” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Fall 2014, p. 136.

<sup>42</sup> Brimmer, 2014, p. 142.

tion, and many others. It has also built dozens of bilateral technical cooperation agreements with other developing states.<sup>43</sup> In its activism in international organizations, Brazil has generally followed a path of quiet diplomacy, working to build coalitions behind the scenes and exert influence through the accumulation of like-minded coalitions.

Within the international order, however, Brazil has pushed an increasingly aggressive form of multilateralism grounded in the idea that the existing order is tilted in favor of its original Western architects. Brazil emphasizes themes of sovereignty, autonomy, and multilateralism and has indicated an intent to become a rule-maker rather than a rule-follower in the international order.<sup>44</sup>

Brazil has also been supportive of global trade regimes, most notably the WTO. Brazil was very active in the Doha round, has enjoyed access to dispute resolution mechanisms, supports the WTO's fairness and nondiscriminatory procedures, and has been an active coalition-forming agent in the WTO, seeking to gather developing-world voices for collective interests. Apart from its involvement with Mercosur, Brazil has tended to eschew regional trade blocs in favor of the WTO.<sup>45</sup> But Brazil has pushed for a more inclusive approach, arguing that the WTO is built on unequal power relationships and needs to be recalibrated. Brazil has worked with the India-Brazil-South Africa group of states to advocate a more transparent and inclusive WTO process.

In recent years, Brazil has become a significant foreign aid donor. Development is core to its foreign policy strategy,<sup>46</sup> and it has created development institutions to manage its aid and is applying many general principles of aid. It has sponsored such global agendas as the Zero-Hunger Program, which was formally adopted by the U.N. in 2012. Unlike the United States, however, Brazil has been hesitant to apply stringent conditions to its aid, for either governance or human rights

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<sup>43</sup> Peter Dauvergne and Deborah B. L. Farias, "The Rise of Brazil as a Global Development Power," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 5, 2012, pp. 906, 909–911.

<sup>44</sup> Mahrukh Doctor, "Brazil's Role in Institutions of Global Economic Governance: The WTO and G20," *Global Society*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2015, p. 288.

<sup>45</sup> Brimmer, 2014, p. 143.

<sup>46</sup> Doctor, 2015, pp. 287–288.

purposes.<sup>47</sup> It has been especially involved in the health arena, promoting health cooperation agreements with many states and working through international and regional health-oriented institutions.

Like India, Brazil has been especially active in peacekeeping. Since 2000, it has participated in 16 peacekeeping operations, primarily in Timor-Leste and Haiti. Today, Brazil ranks among the top-20 most-active international contributors to U.N. peacekeeping operations, active in Haiti, the Congo, and Lebanon.

Yet also like India, Brazil remains dissatisfied with some key aspects of the current order. Apart from supporting reform at the U.N. Security Council, Brazil has advocated more-inclusive global economic and trade policies, for example. Brazil has encountered U.S. criticism in its efforts to provide low-cost antiretroviral medicines to its citizens and the broader developing world. In 2001, Washington lodged a WTO protest against such Brazilian initiatives, claiming that they violated patents held by U.S. pharmaceutical companies. Under significant global pressure, however, the United States backed off of its motion.

In addition, Brazil does not support some of the enforcement-oriented characteristics of the order. Brazil's recent experience with military rule added to its concern with the role of military force in politics.<sup>48</sup> The result is that Brazil is suspicious of any military adventures, even those undertaken in the name of the international order. It has been generally unsupportive of more-interventionist versions of the responsibility-to-protect concept and abstained from key votes on the Libya operation in 2011. Along with India and others, Brazil indicated a concern that the action, while well-intentioned, violated fundamental U.N. Charter norms. Its criticism of Russia has been relatively muted.

Brazil's independent stance has also been evident in nonproliferation issues. Like many developing countries, it views the NPT as fundamentally unfair, creating nuclear "haves" and "have-nots" in a way that privileges the world's developed nations. Thus, while Brazil is a member of the NPT and a vocal proponent of nonproliferation, it has refused to sign the International Atomic Energy Agency Addi-

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<sup>47</sup> Dauvergne and Farias, 2012, pp. 906–908.

<sup>48</sup> Brimmer, 2014, p. 137; Dauvergne and Farias, 2012, p. 906.

tional Protocol until progress is made in making the NPT fundamentally more equitable. Brazil appears willing to accept outcomes and standards different from those that the United States accepts. In 2010, Brazil joined with Turkey to propose an alternative approach to resolving the Iranian nuclear issue.

Brazil's position on the core democratic and human rights norms of the liberal order is complex. On the one hand, it is a vigorous participant in many international treaties and processes in these areas, and it has worked with the United States to promote recent initiatives. Its national policy endorses the concept of universal human rights. Yet Brazil has been less willing than the United States to be explicitly coercive; it has hesitated, in particular, to accuse some states of violating such norms.<sup>49</sup> Brazil's complex history, its focus on national sovereignty, the importance of its relations with nondemocratic countries, and many other factors leave it with a complex and sometimes inconsistent position on issues of global liberal values.<sup>50</sup>

Brazil is an excellent example of a state that straddles the line between supporter and critic of the existing international order. It "exposes the rather simplistic dichotomy between status quo and critical states," conclude two scholars, who argue that, in fact, Brazil "is one of both. It requires a seat around the international table," but once there, it demands a voice in determining outcomes.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusion

For the time being at least, no leading or emerging great power has positioned itself as a direct opponent of the postwar international order or undertaken a firmly revisionist stance. Although the pattern could

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<sup>49</sup> Brimmer, 2014, p. 146.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Hurrell, "Brazil: What Kind of Rising State in What Kind of International Order?" in Alan S. Alexandroff and Andrew F. Cooper, eds., *Rising States, Rising Institutions: Challenges for Global Governance*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010, p. 145.

<sup>51</sup> Richmond and Tellidis, 2014, pp. 570–571.

change, all of these states continue to view various elements of the order as instrumentally useful. More than that, they crave international status and recognition and see participation in institutions of the order as a leading route to that goal. They have powerful stakes in elements of the order, including economic institutions and the U.N., and view a complete collapse as dangerous. For all these reasons, these actors confront significant self-interested obstacles to enacting policies that might undermine the order.

In most cases, the pattern in official signaling about the order is not that these states oppose the existing order but that they have interests and identities—particularly their identities as developing, non-Western countries that are growing in economic power—that influence how they perceive issues and how they behave. India, Brazil, and many other rising actors “do not see themselves as renegade, revisionist, or opposed to the international order, but they do have concerns about the path of development of this order.” But even these constructive critiques will grow more pointed, because “such actors have the confidence to adopt contrary positions or methods, simultaneously cooperating with but also adopting ‘standard’ international practices” in their own unique way.<sup>52</sup>

While these actors have different views on specific issues, they share a common desire—indeed, demand—for a greater role and voice in the institutions, and especially in setting the rules and norms, of the international system. These states view the order as Western-created and Western-dominated, and they seek, in various ways and with varying degrees of intensity, to level the playing field. They perceive the order’s rules as disproportionately benefiting the United States, and they notice that the United States frequently exempts itself from the constraints of the order’s institutions in order to pursue its interests. In addition, these states are skeptical of the Western trend of using military force in support of ostensibly humanitarian goals, because they have observed how such interventions have been used to effect regime change, as in Libya in 2011. (To be fair, the responsibility-to-protect principle has become controversial in the United States and Europe as

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<sup>52</sup> Richmond and Tellidis, 2014, pp. 566, 568.

well.) One implication of these realities is the need for continuous, flexible, and creative diplomacy. More power centers mean more need for diplomatic engagement and classic diplomacy. In addition, cooperation on more-modest and more-technical issues is likely to be easier: “The smaller and more discreet the forum, the easier it will be” for leading powers to develop constructive solutions.<sup>53</sup>

The question for the future is whether underlying geopolitical and socioeconomic dynamics—a continually shifting global balance of power combined with a significant uprising of popular feeling against the neoliberal ideology of the global trade order—drive these states into a fundamentally different position relative to the order. History suggests that such a development is entirely possible, despite the significant national interests that appear to dictate continued support for the order today. We examine these risks in more detail in Chapter Nine.

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<sup>53</sup> Schaffer, 2009, p. 86.



## Public Attitudes Toward Elements of the Order

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In other chapters of this report, we have assessed the health of the order through the lenses of international institutions and respect for the order's norms and values. Those chapters assess official state behavior. In this chapter, to gauge the health of the order, we look for evidence of public support for the order's rules and institutions, for mutual trust or hostility along key dyads, and for socialization of the order's norms within countries.

To do so, we survey categories of public opinion in three areas: (1) the order's rules and institutions, (2) the order's liberal norms and values, and (3) internationalism and international cooperation in general. We focus on U.S. and EU opinion surveys and assess broader international opinion in certain key areas. Data come primarily from the Pew Research Center, Eurobarometer, and the World Values Survey.

It is essential to note that public opinion surveys present a highly complex and nuanced portrait, and there are no simple trends. Public opinion on the liberal norms and values of the international order varies greatly over time, across countries, and between demographic (political and economic) divides within countries. Public opinion also does not necessarily reflect what a country's official behavior will be.

*The key finding in this chapter is that trends in public opinion of the order, its institutions, and internationalism show reasons for both optimism and concern.* There is growing hostility and disfavor in some dyads—in particular, Russia-NATO relations have soured in recent years—but U.S. concerns relating to China and Russia are more limited and show stable trend lines. While U.S. public opinion appears hostile to inter-

national trade, it is more supportive of the international order's liberal political norms and values. Public support for the EU saw some gains in recent years, but the Union has also faced challenges to its unity and consolidation of powers in the forms of the Brexit and Grexit (Greece) movements, among others. An essential question raised here, therefore, is how to maintain a global order founded on integration and internationalism when trends relating to globalized trade and culture are pulling in so many directions.

### Support for the Order's Rules and Institutions

Measuring domestic support for the order's rules, institutions, or proxies serves as one way to assess the strength of the international order. We focus first on U.S. public attitudes toward the U.N. and NATO, as reported in recent Gallup and Pew Research Center polls. We then assess European attitudes toward the EU, as reported by Pew and Eurobarometer polls, in the lead-up to the June 2016 United Kingdom referendum on EU membership, or Brexit. The data here, as in other areas, are nuanced and reveal positive, negative, and uncertain trends.

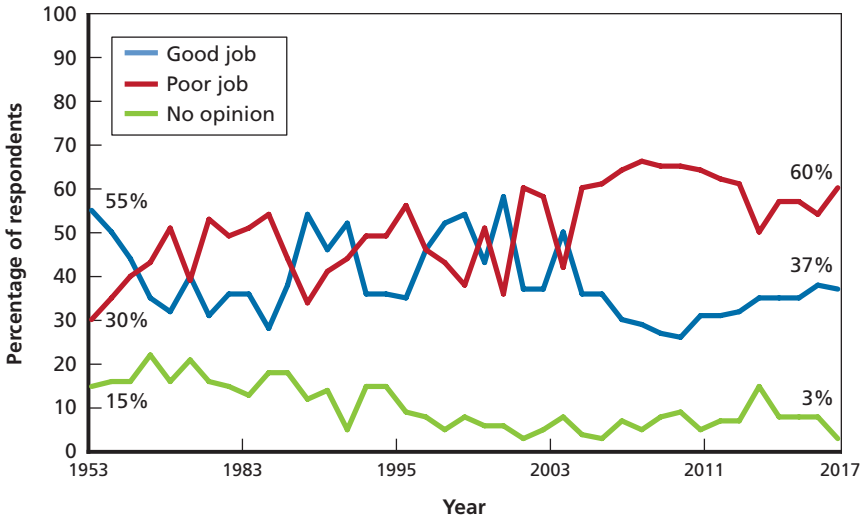
Gallup data show that U.S. public opinion of the U.N. has improved in recent years. The percentage of Americans declaring that the U.N. is doing a "good job" rose from 26 percent in 2008 to 37 percent in 2017. The favorable rating has been as high as 58 percent in recent decades, but the long-term average since the 1950s is about 40 percent, and so the current figure stands within the range of historical variation (Figure 7.1).<sup>1</sup> A Pew global poll from 2016 found even more-positive results: Asking a binary question about whether people had a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the U.N., the survey found 64 percent of Americans with a favorable opinion—higher than in China (54 percent favorable), Japan (45 percent), or India (40 percent), three traditionally strong supporters of the U.N. Globally, proportions with favorable views significantly outpaced unfavorable ones, with only a single country (Greece) showing an overall unfavorable view. The

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<sup>1</sup> Gallup, "United Nations," poll, undated(b).

**Figure 7.1**  
**U.S. Perceptions of the U.N., 1953–2017**

**Do you think the United Nations is doing a good job or a poor job in trying to solve the problems it has had to face?**



SOURCE: Adapted from Gallup, undated(b).

NOTE: Gallup asked the question at inconsistent intervals, including, for example, three times in 1995 and not at all between 1997 and 1999. The chart plots data for each time the question was asked.

RAND RR1994-7.1

U.N., concluded the Pew report, receives “generally positive ratings from a diverse group of its constituent countries.” Longitudinal data presented in the survey suggest that current numbers fall within historical ranges and do not represent a radical decline.<sup>2</sup>

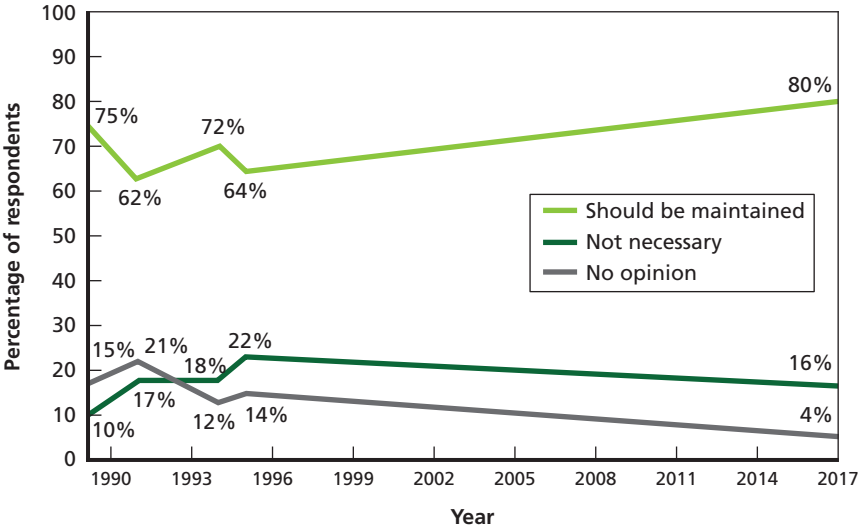
As shown in Figure 7.2, the majority (80 percent) of Americans in a 2017 poll thought the NATO alliance should be maintained, and only 16 percent thought that it is not necessary.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, there is some wariness toward U.S. NATO commitments. According to Pew Research Center polling, 37 percent of Americans viewed the alliance

<sup>2</sup> Jacob Poushter, “Favorable Views of the UN Prevail in Europe, Asia and U.S.,” Pew Research Center, September 16, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Smith, “Most Americans Support NATO Alliance,” Gallup, February 17, 2017.

**Figure 7.2**  
**U.S. Opinion on Whether the NATO Alliance Should Be Maintained, 1990–2017**

Do you think the NATO alliance should be maintained, or is the alliance not necessary any more?



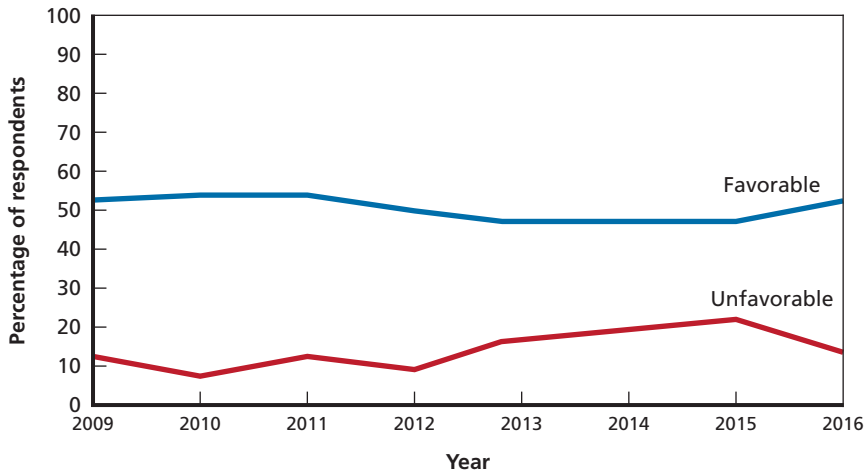
SOURCE: M. Smith, 2017.

RAND RR1994-7.2

as “more important to other NATO countries” than it is to the United States. Only 15 percent said that NATO was “more important to the U.S.,” while 41 percent said it was “about as important to the U.S. as other NATO countries.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, while NATO membership is widely seen as good for the United States, there is also some public skepticism of its relative importance to the United States compared with other

<sup>4</sup> Pew Research Center, “Chapter 6. NATO, U.S. Allies, the EU and UN,” in *Public Uncertain, Divided over America’s Place in the World*, May 5, 2016b.

**Figure 7.3**  
**U.S. Opinion of NATO, 2009–2016**



SOURCE: Pew Research Center, 2016b.

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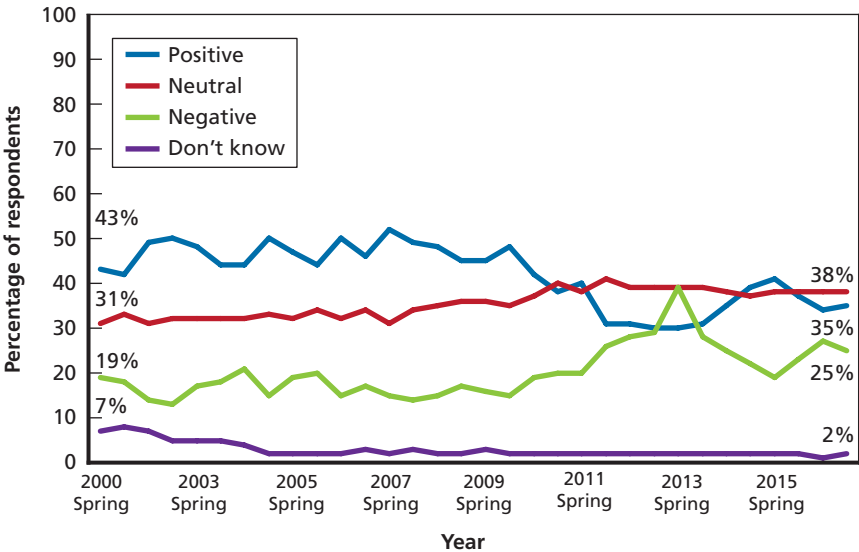
NATO countries. At the same time, U.S. public favorability ratings for NATO have remained relatively stable since 2009 (Figure 7.3).

In recent years, the EU has faced challenges to its unity. Recent movements for European disintegration—notably, the prospects of Brexit and Grexit—have tested aspirations for an “ever-closer union.” Fluctuations in public opinion polling data reflect this uncertainty. Eurobarometer data show that EU favorability ratings fell from an all-time high of 52 percent in 2007 to 30 percent in 2012 and 2013; public opinion improved for a time, increasing to 41 percent by spring 2015 before falling again (Figure 7.4).<sup>5</sup> A healthy majority of Europeans since 1992 have viewed themselves as at least partly European, as

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 83*, May 2015.

**Figure 7.4**  
**European Perceptions of the European Union, 2000–2016**

In general, does the European Union conjure up a positive, neutral, or negative image?



SOURCE: European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 65*, December 2014, p. 15; and European Commission, 2016, p. 15.

RAND RR1994-7.4

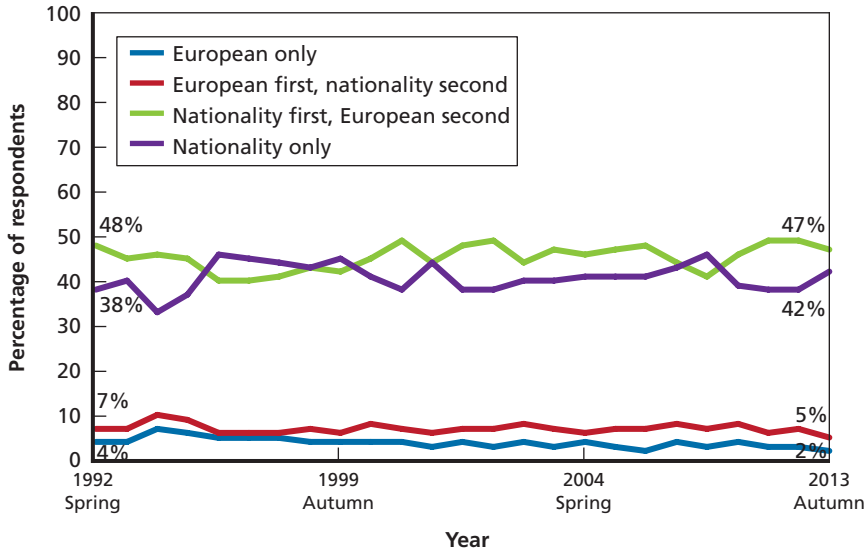
opposed to identifying exclusively as German, Spanish, French, and so on (Figure 7.5).

In contrast to the Eurobarometer data, however, Pew polling data present a less optimistic outlook on public opinion trend lines. According to Pew data, public support within Europe for the EU has fallen steadily since 2004, despite a short-lived rebound in 2014 and 2015.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, EU favorability ratings vary significantly by country: In 2016, 72 percent of people in Poland held a favorable view of the EU, but only 27 percent in Greece, 38 percent in France, and 44 percent in

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Stokes, “Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit,” Pew Research Center, June 7, 2016b.

**Figure 7.5**  
**European Views on Citizenship, 1992–2013**

Do you consider yourself to be primarily European, your nationality, or both?



SOURCE: European Commission, 2014, 2015, 2016.

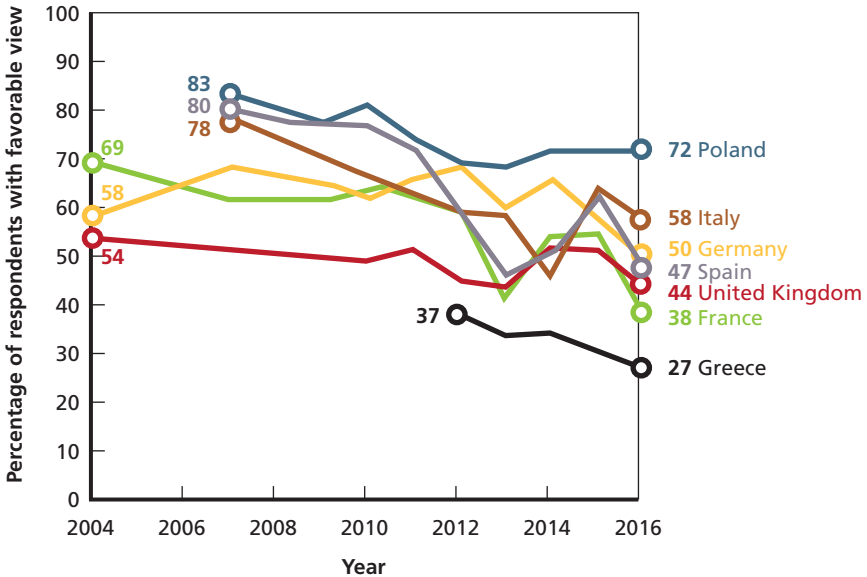
NOTE: The European Commission asked the question at inconsistent intervals. The chart plots data for each time the question was asked.

RAND RR1994-7.5

the United Kingdom had a favorable opinion (Figure 7.6). According to 2016 polling, there are also concerns about the EU's future and potential for the "ever-closer union"; the data show widespread sentiment or understanding (70 percent) that Brexit would be a bad thing for the EU. At the same time, however, 42 percent of respondents thought that "some powers should be returned to national governments," while fewer than one in five felt that "national governments should transfer more powers" to the EU.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Stokes, 2016b.

**Figure 7.6**  
**Favorability of the EU, by European Country**



SOURCE: Stokes, 2016b. Used with permission.

RAND RR1994-7.6

## Support for Trade

Another important measure of public support for elements of the order is the degree of backing for liberalized trade, both in general and in proposed treaties. The story here is an immensely complex one, involving often contradictory indicators between countries and trade-related issues. The phrasing and timing of survey and polling questions can decisively affect the results, suggesting that only limited faith can be placed in any snapshot of attitudes toward trade. Results differ dramatically by segment of society, as well; in some cases, specific cross-national groups (such as business leaders or highly educated citizens) tend to have much more similar views than the people of any one nation.

In general, however, the story appears to be one of largely persistent support for trade as a route to national wealth, with various exceptions



and counter-indications within specific communities and at particular times. Despite years of slow growth and the most serious financial crisis since 1929, public support for trade, and for specific trade agreements, has held up remarkably well. As with the general trade picture, however, there are some worrisome signs that point to a growing disaffection with the assumptions of the postwar economic order.

As one example, a 2014 Pew survey found that more than 80 percent of Americans supported the idea that trade carries economic benefits.<sup>8</sup> This result parallels many other surveys over the past five years, suggesting that a dominant majority of Americans broadly endorse trade as a mechanism for national prosperity. Recent Gallup polls, for example, refute the idea that Americans are becoming far more skeptical of trade: In a 2017 survey, Gallup found that 72 percent of Americans saw trade as an opportunity rather than a threat—*the highest number since Gallup began asking this question in 1992*. According to that same poll, just 23 percent of Americans saw trade as a threat—the lowest number since 1992. Over the past five years, that number has hovered between 23 and 38 percent, below the average levels of the 1990s and far below the peak of 51 percent during the 2008 financial crisis (Figure 7.7).<sup>9</sup>

However, if a poll asks the question another way, it can produce seemingly contrary results. One 2016 Bloomberg survey found that Americans would prefer a U.S.-owned factory in their community over a Chinese-owned one—even if the Chinese-owned firm on U.S. soil would produce twice as many jobs. The poll found that two-thirds of Americans favored restrictions on imported goods to improve U.S. competitiveness. Furthermore, 44 percent said that NAFTA has been bad for the U.S. economy; only 29 percent endorsed the deal. “Opposition to free trade,” the Bloomberg report concluded, “is a unifying

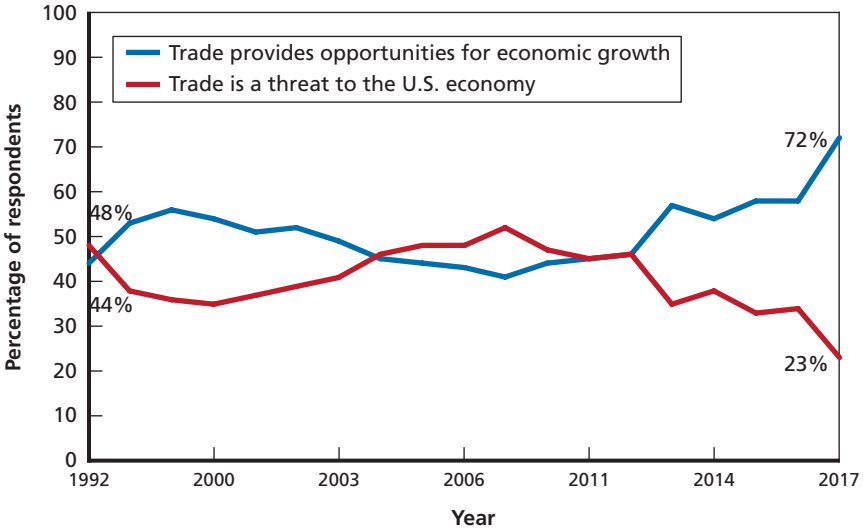
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<sup>8</sup> Bruce Stokes, “Republicans, Especially Trump Supporters, See Free Trade Deals as Bad for the U.S.,” Pew Research Center, March 31, 2016a.

<sup>9</sup> Art Swift, “In U.S., Record-High 72% See Foreign Trade as Opportunity,” Gallup, February 16, 2017. See also William Mauldin, “Amid Trump’s Rise, Americans Warmer on Free Trade and Immigration,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2016, reporting a poll that found that 55 percent of Americans believed free trade was good for America, and 38 percent thought it was bad.

**Figure 7.7**  
**U.S. Views on Foreign Trade, 1992–2017**

**Does foreign trade provide an opportunity for economic growth through increased U.S. exports or a threat to the economy from foreign imports?**



SOURCE: Swift, 2017.

NOTE: Gallup asked the question at inconsistent intervals. The chart plots data for each time the question was asked.

RAND RR1994-7.7

concept even in a deeply divided electorate.”<sup>10</sup> The 2014 Pew survey found that fewer Americans supported “growing” trade with other countries.<sup>11</sup>

The result is a challenging and often contradictory landscape in which views of trade differ sharply among parts of the electorate, on distinct trade-related issues, and by poll depending on how questions are phrased.<sup>12</sup> A recent *Washington Post* survey of polling data

<sup>10</sup> John McCormick and Terrence Dopp, “Free Trade Opposition Unites Political Parties in Bloomberg Poll,” Bloomberg, March 24, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Stokes, 2016a.

<sup>12</sup> See Douglas A. Irwin, “The Truth About Trade,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 4, July–August 2016, pp. 87–90.

found that while “there is little evidence of a broad reaction against free trade,” Americans “are deeply conflicted about the issue.”<sup>13</sup> From the standpoint of the international order, current trends in opinion offer some reason for worry—some aspects of trade opposition are definitely on the rise—but do not suggest a fundamental break with the underlying liberal ideology of the order. The broad necessity of trade as a route to prosperity appears broadly accepted.

Internationally, these complex and nuanced trends appear as well. Support for free markets has held relatively steady after the 2008 financial crisis, declining notably in only a handful of countries that were especially hard-hit (such as Spain) and, in fact, rising in many key countries (such as Germany, China, and France). Overall, from 2007 to 2009, the unweighted average of global attitudes toward free markets was basically unchanged.<sup>14</sup>

One way that evolving attitudes may affect the future of the order is by working to obstruct future trade agreements. The most consistent finding about such proposed treaties as the TPP and TTIP is that few people understand what they mean.<sup>15</sup> But the broad perception of growing skepticism of trade, and the need of political leaders to cater to specific constituencies, has created a situation in which the political barriers to trade have grown significantly, seemingly out of scale with general public opinion. U.S. and European political candidates, in particular, have become almost uniformly skeptical of bold, large-scale trade deals.

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<sup>13</sup> Max Ehrenfreund, “What Americans Really Think About Free Trade,” *Washington Post*, March 25, 2016. See also Polling Report, “International Trade/Global Economy,” web page, undated, which offers numerous polls on trade. Two broad impressions emerge from the collection of data there. First, the portrait of U.S. public opinion on trade is incredibly complex; and, second, there seems to be some evidence of a decline in support from 2014 to 2016, although averages still remain largely in historical ranges.

<sup>14</sup> Drezner, 2014, pp. 147–151.

<sup>15</sup> Ballotpedia, “The Trans-Pacific Partnership Trade Deal: Public Opinion on TPP and TTIP,” web page, 2016. See also Ryan Rainey, “As Trade Plays in Campaigns, Most Americans Don’t Know What TPP Is,” *Morning Consult*, April 21, 2016.

## Support for Liberal Norms and Values

Domestic opinion about the norms and values of the liberal order can reflect how successfully they have permeated individual countries and societies. We draw from Pew Research Center and World Values Survey data to assess public opinion on political, social, and economic issues. These indicators capture public support for free speech, freedom of the press, and free trade, rather than how states do or do not permit the exercise of these liberal norms and values in practice.

According to Pew Research Center analysis, public support for freedom of speech, of the press, and of information remains strong internationally.<sup>16</sup> U.S., European, and Latin American support for these rights exceeds the global median. Americans, in particular, are more tolerant of a variety of types of expression—including types that do not enjoy wide support globally. For example, in a 2015 Pew survey, only 35 percent of people globally supported the right to make public statements that “are offensive to your religion or beliefs,” while 77 percent of Americans supported this right. Likewise, only 35 percent of people globally supported the right to make public statements that “are offensive to minority groups,” while 67 percent of Americans supported this right.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, U.S., European, and Latin American support for freedom of religion, gender equality, and free and fair elections also exceeds the global median. In that same 2015 Pew survey, 84 percent of Americans said that it is important that people can practice their religion freely; 91 percent said that it is important that women have the same rights as men; and 79 percent said that it is important that honest elections are held regularly with a choice of at least two political parties.<sup>18</sup>

Roberto Foa and Yascha Mounk have used the World Values Survey to question the degree of support—especially among younger people—for democratic institutions and values, particularly in the United States. For example, when asked to rate (on a scale of 1 to 10)

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Wike and Katie Simmons, “Global Support for Principle of Free Expression, but Opposition to Some Forms of Speech,” Pew Research Center, November 18, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Wike and Simmons, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Wike and Simmons, 2016.

how essential it is to live in a democracy, 72 percent of those born before World War II chose 10. For U.S. millennials, only 30 percent rated the value of democracy that high. In 2011, nearly a quarter of U.S. millennials rated democracy as a “bad” or “very bad” system for running the country. Foa and Mounk view these trends as one of several “structural problems in the functioning of liberal democracy” and possibly a “threat to its very existence.”<sup>19</sup> That study finds some support in other public opinion polling.<sup>20</sup> However, subsequent analyses, such as a study by Erik Voeten, cast doubt on these figures and support the essential argument of this study—that, on most measures, support for the values and norms of the postwar order has remained relatively stable for some time.<sup>21</sup>

The relationship between immigration and the order may be somewhat indirect. Measuring support for immigration can serve as a means of approximating support for liberal norms and values. On the other hand, many elements of the order predated the most-recent migration agreements and are independent of the free movement of people. In much of the world, despite the recent publicity surrounding notable cases (such as rising skepticism in some European nations), public opinion on immigration has been relatively stable, especially in recent years.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, “The Democratic Disconnect,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, No. 3, July 2016, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> One survey from AmericasBarometer, for example, found that political tolerance—for contrary views and minority groups—was declining notably among younger Americans (Amy Erica Smith, “Do Americans Still Believe in Democracy?” *Washington Post*, April 9, 2016). A Pew poll from 2015 found that only 19 percent of Americans believed they could trust the government “always or most of the time” (the comparable figure in 1958 was 77 percent) (Pew Research Center, “Beyond Distrust: How Americans View Their Government,” November 23, 2015, p. 4).

<sup>21</sup> Erik Voeten, “No, People Really Aren’t Turning Away from Democracy,” *Washington Post*, December 9, 2016b. See also the draft paper linked at the site (Erik Voeten, “Are People Really Turning Away from Democracy?” unpublished manuscript, December 8, 2016a).

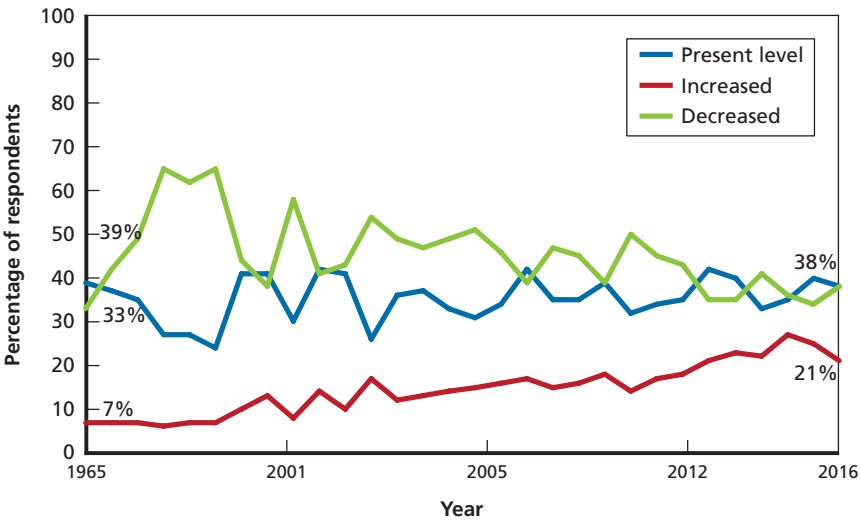
<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Gallup, “Immigration,” poll, undated(a); Bruce Stokes and Russ Oates, “Chapter 3. Most Support Limiting Immigration,” in *A Fragile Rebound for EU Image on Eve of European Parliament Elections*, Pew Research Center, May 12, 2014; and Robert P. Jones, “What Americans Actually Think About Immigration,” *Atlantic*, February 25, 2015.

As shown in Figure 7.8, U.S. views on immigration levels have fluctuated since 1965. According to Gallup polling data, the overall long-term trend is that the number of Americans who believe immigration levels should increase has risen, but the majority of Americans still prefer that levels decrease or remain the same.

Tracking public support for trade can reflect support for broader liberal economic norms and values. According to Pew research, as of April 2016, “Nearly half of Americans (49%) say U.S. involvement in the global economy is a bad thing because it lowers wages and costs jobs; fewer (44%) see this as a good thing because it provides the U.S. with new markets and opportunities for growth.”<sup>23</sup> Globally, however,

**Figure 7.8**  
**U.S. Opinion on Immigration Levels, 1965–2016**

Should immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?



SOURCE: Gallup, undated(a).

NOTE: Gallup asked the question at inconsistent intervals. The chart plots data for each time the question was asked.

RAND RR1994-7.8

<sup>23</sup> Pew Research Center, *Public Uncertain, Divided Over America's Place in the World*, May 5, 2016c.

a 2014 survey across 44 countries found that 81 percent of people had a positive view of trade, with 74 percent saying that “foreign companies’ building factories in our country is good,” and 54 percent agreeing that trade creates jobs.<sup>24</sup> Support for trade and international investment is strongest in developing countries, while skepticism on the merits of trade is stronger in advanced economies, such as France, Italy, Japan, and the United States. For example, in 2014, 50 percent of American saw trade with other countries as leading to job losses, with only 20 percent saying it creates jobs.<sup>25</sup>

## Support for Internationalism

Surveys measuring public attitudes toward global engagement and other countries can serve as a proxy for a population’s perception of the value of internationalism. This section assesses the degree to which key players value global engagement and increasingly trust or mistrust each other and whether they favor cooperation or competition. We find both positive and negative patterns and trends. For example, public opinion within Asia—apart from China—favors internationalism. However, there are signs of strain along important dyads: U.S.-Russia and U.S.-China.

Some recent Pew Research Center analysis shows that the U.S. public is wary of global engagement. According to April 2016 polling, 57 percent of Americans thought the United States “should deal with [its] own problems/let others deal with theirs as best they can.”<sup>26</sup> The data also show that, in terms of solving world problems, 27 percent felt that the United States does too little, 28 percent the right amount, and 41 percent too much. The number of Americans who said the country should “go its own way in international matters” was roughly 60 percent.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Pew Research Center, “Faith and Skepticism About Trade, Foreign Investment,” September 16, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Pew Research Center, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Pew Research Center, 2016c.

<sup>27</sup> Pew Research Center, 2016c.

Yet the data are mixed and show a complex picture, with significant support for strong U.S. leadership abroad—and no clear pattern of long-term decline in such support. The same 2016 Pew poll found a swing of ten percentage points in favor of greater American leadership abroad.<sup>28</sup> In some cases, such as the question about whether the United States should “deal with its own problems” and let other countries deal with theirs, attitudes have fluctuated around a relatively stable level over the past decade. Sixty percent of Americans said that the United States should “cooperate fully” with the U.N.—down from 73 percent in 1964 and 71 percent in 1993, but up from 51 percent in 2009 and well within the historical average range. The proportion who believed that the United States should “take into account the views of its major allies” when making foreign policy choices was 75 percent, comfortably within the postwar average range.

Other recent polling shows a similar degree of robustness in the American support for a global role and a multilateral sensibility. In a 2017 Gallup poll, about half of Americans thought that the United States should play a major role in world affairs (Figure 7.9).<sup>29</sup> The percentage that felt it should play a leading role was equal to that feeling it should play a minor role (23 percent). Very few felt that the United States should play no role. Looking across many questions and indicators, there is no long-term decay in public support for an engaged and multilateral U.S. role.

Attitudes are more mixed with regard to specific bilateral relationships. The end of the Cold War provided an opportunity for positive U.S.-Russia and NATO-Russia relations and cooperation. However, these relations have soured in recent years. Pew research shows that from 2013 to 2015, NATO member countries’ favorability ratings for Russia dropped from 36 percent to 25 percent; they reached an all-time low of 19 percent in 2014, the year Russia annexed Crimea.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Pew Research Center, 2016c.

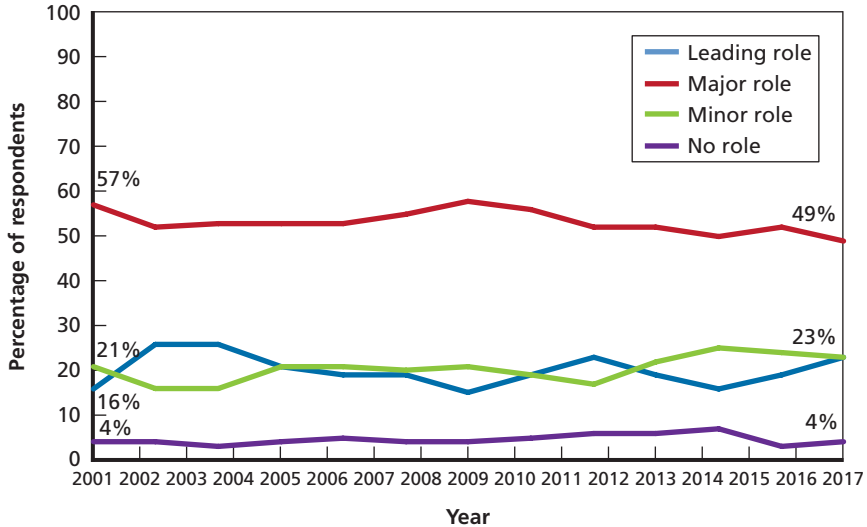
<sup>29</sup> Gallup, “U.S. Position in the World,” poll, undated(c).

<sup>30</sup> Bruce Stokes, “Russia, Putin Held in Low Regard Around the World,” Pew Research Center, August 5, 2015.



**Figure 7.9**  
**U.S. Opinion on the Role the United States Should Play in World Affairs, 2001–2017**

Should the U.S. take the leading role, a major role but not leading role, a minor role, or no role at all in world affairs?



SOURCE: Gallup, undated(c).

RAND RR1994-7.9

This growing disfavor is mutual. Russian perceptions of NATO member countries in particular, and of the Alliance in general, have plummeted since 2011. Favorability ratings for the United States fell from 56 percent to 16 percent, for the EU from 64 percent to 31 percent, and for NATO as a whole from 37 percent to 12 percent. Increasing mutual suspicion and disfavor along this key dyad of the international political system may hinder the ability of the order's institutions to promote peace and stability. Of potential concern for the United States, while Russian favorability ratings for the United States and NATO members have fallen, favorability rates for China have risen to 79 percent.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Jacob Poushter, "Russians Warm to China as Relations with U.S. Cool," Pew Research Center, July 8, 2015.

As with favorability ratings for Russia, U.S. public opinion of China has also worsened in recent years as mistrust and disfavor grow. In 2011, 36 percent of the U.S. public had an unfavorable view of China;<sup>32</sup> by 2015, this had increased to 54 percent. Only 38 percent saw China in a positive light.<sup>33</sup>

While there is mutual *disfavor*, U.S. *concerns* or fears relating to China and Russia are still relatively limited and showing stable trends. Pew notes, “There is no sign of growing public concern about either China or Russia. Roughly a quarter of the public (23%) views each as an adversary, while 44% say each is a serious problem but not an adversary. About three-in-ten say neither China nor Russia pose much of a problem for the U.S.” Additionally, Pew found in spring 2016 that there had not been a rise in the percentage of the U.S. public viewing Russia explicitly as an adversary: “More now say Russia is not much of a problem than did so in 2014, shortly after the country’s annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea region (30% today, 15% then).”<sup>34</sup> Admittedly, public attitudes and opinion ebb and flow. It is difficult to predict whether these recent downturns along key dyads will have a lasting impact.

## The Rise of Nationalism

An important area of public opinion relative to the future of the international order is the rise of nationalism and ultranationalist movements. This trend takes somewhat different forms in different places, but it has been most visible in Europe, where extreme right-wing parties have won parliamentary or congressional seats and even competed in presidential races. In addition, nationalist sentiment reaffirming the value and independence of specific nations has grown more generally.

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<sup>32</sup> Pew Research Center, “Public Opinion About the U.S. and China,” February 13, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Wike, Bruce Stokes, and Jacob Poushter, “Chapter 2. Views of China and the Global Balance of Power,” in *Global Publics Back U.S. on Fighting ISIS, but Are Critical of Post-9/11 Torture*, Pew Research Center, June 23, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Pew Research Center, “Chapter 3. International Threats, Defense Spending,” in *Public Uncertain, Divided over America’s Place in the World*, May 5, 2016a.

While these gains have not yet had a significant impact on the international order, the popular dissatisfaction they reflect with policies on immigration, trade, and the concept of the EU have the potential to trickle up to policies that stand to affect that order. Yet, as noted in previous chapters, this phenomenon may have natural limits, and the most-recent evidence may point to a moderation of the trend.

But rising levels of nationalism are, by no means, limited to Europe and the United States. Although the movements take different forms, other major powers (such as India and China) also struggle to balance populist movements and their political implications. While many of the effects of such types of nationalism—such as religious and ethnic variants in India—are focused more on internal populations, they may also extend to relations with external nations through trade agreements, participation in U.N. operations, or outright conflict based on intolerance.

Nationalism can take many forms.<sup>35</sup> In its most essential form, it merely reflects a belief in the inherent worth—and, in some cases, superiority—of one national community. Various forms of ultranationalism represent an ideology based on ethnic or religious solidarity that tends to be highly exclusionary toward minorities and immigrants, and, politically, on parties that espouse strong nation-first and protectionist platforms. In either case, the “core element is a myth of a homogenous nation.”<sup>36</sup>

In Western Europe and the United States, this ideology tends to be associated with far-right political parties that are socially very conservative. In Eastern Europe, such populaces and organizations are often more left wing, because a legacy of Soviet nationalism and left-wing politics forms the basis for the more culturally conservative sector

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<sup>35</sup> Classic works on nationalism include Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed., London: Verso, 1991; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed., Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2009; and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Minkenberg, “The Radical Right in Postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe: Comparative Observations and Interpretations,” *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2002, p. 337.

of society, so both far-right and far-left parties there often have an ultranationalist element.<sup>37</sup> In India, nationalism is expressed with more of a religious flavor, as seen with the rise of the Hindu nationalists.

Of most concern to the international order so far is the rising tide of populist nationalism in Europe, as it often accompanies a strong sense of *Euroscepticism* (the rejection of current or further integration) and has potential ramifications on the way in which individual nations participate in international organizations, such as the EU or U.N. During the May 2014 European Parliament elections, Eurosceptic parties increased their seats from 121 (15.8 percent of the total number) to 174 (23.3 percent) and ultimately formed three voting groups at varying points along the right-wing scale. Members of far-right parties actually came in first for the European Parliament in three different countries: the United Kingdom, France, and Denmark.

While these parties have yet to exert much influence on legislation, their presence has forced moderate left-wing and right-wing representatives who would not normally work together to combine to form a majority bloc and has granted Eurosceptic parties a legitimacy they had not previously had. Additionally, EU member countries that have Eurosceptic parties in power at the national level, including Hungary and Poland, began in 2016 to challenge EU legal and moral stances. Because it would require a unanimous vote to issue sanctions against these states, the European Parliament has so far found itself unable to issue such punitive actions.<sup>38</sup>

Over the past three years, parties with anti-EU platforms have gained seats in multiple national elections and are part of the governing majority in seven countries (Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom). While many of those parties are relatively mainstream, such as the British Conservatives, there has also been an increase in ultranationalist right-wing parties. In Austria's 2016 presidential election, Norbert Hofer of the far-right

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<sup>37</sup> Alina Polyakova, *Putinism and the Far Right*, Washington, D.C.: Atlantic Council, November 2015b, p. 53.

<sup>38</sup> Nicolai von Ondarza, "Euro-Sceptics in Power," *SWP Comments*, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, April 2016.

Freedom Party lost to a moderate candidate by a mere 0.6 percent of the vote, and France's National Front, though suffering a significant defeat in the May 2017 presidential elections in France, nonetheless won some 11 million votes, a significant advance on earlier showings by the party.

In the 2015 British Parliamentary elections, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) won 12.6 percent of the vote (roughly 3.9 million votes), a jump of 9.5 percentage points from the 2010 elections. But because of the election system, the party won only one seat in the House of Commons. While UKIP has suggested that it may push for proportional representation in elections, the party is still generally satisfied that, in terms of percentage of the vote, it came in third in the country.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the National Party in France won only two seats in the 2012 parliamentary elections, but it won nearly 14 percent of the vote; then, it won no seats in municipal elections in 2015 but won nearly 28 percent of the popular vote, more than any other single party.<sup>40</sup>

In 2015 and 2016, right-wing parties made gains in the popular vote compared with previous elections in Austria (27 to 35 percent), Bulgaria (7 to 12 percent), the Czech Republic (0 to 7 percent), Denmark (12 to 21 percent), Poland (30 to 38 percent), Romania (3 to 14 percent), Slovakia (5 to 17 percent), Sweden (6 to 13 percent), and Switzerland (27 to 29 percent).<sup>41</sup> Despite few outright successes, the popularity of such extreme parties forces often more-mainstream conservative parties to begin to shift politically further right by adopting or co-opting some of the themes these parties espouse. For example,

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<sup>39</sup> Mark Townsend, "Five Million Votes, Two Seats: Smaller Parties Demand a Change in the Rules," *Guardian*, May 9, 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Gregor Aisch, Adam Pearce, and Bryant Rousseau, "How Far Is Europe Swinging to the Right?" *New York Times*, May 22, 2016. See also Election Guide, "Democracy Assistance and Election News," home page, USAID, undated.

<sup>41</sup> Of note, the countries that have endured the most economic hardship since the downturn—namely, Greece, Spain, and Italy—along with Portugal, have some of the lowest levels of ultranationalist, right-wing party support, as many left-wing parties have fared better there.

the British Conservative Party put forward the UKIP-driven Brexit referendum even though UKIP has no power in the government.<sup>42</sup>

Recent electoral results in such places as Spain, Austria, the Netherlands, and France suggest that the European expressions of these movements may have reached the apex of their trajectory, at least barring major discontinuities, such as a severe economic crisis. Yet globally, the nationalist wave—expressed in everything from the “America First” vision of the Trump administration to growing expressions of anti-Western national pride in Russia—remains very strong.<sup>43</sup> It continues to pose a threat to key institutions and norms of the order, especially free and open trade.

### Themes in European Nationalism

There is little scholarly consensus on what is driving the growth of populist nationalism around the world, making it difficult to estimate how long term a phenomenon it is likely to be and what its corresponding level of impact might be. There are recurring themes, though, that seem to be associated with ultranationalist political parties and organizations that have a broad popular appeal at different times.

An obvious and prominent theme has been opposition to immigration. Concerns about immigration and demands for controlling the flow of immigrants have been a core rallying cry for ultranationalist and extreme right-wing groups in Europe and the United States since at least the 1980s. Such a sentiment is frequently associated with xenophobia or at least a virulent ethnic exclusionism. Anti-immigration platforms play off of the populations’ fear that immigrants are responsible for a lack of economic opportunities for the ethnic or religious majority (a claim that is not supported by research, however).<sup>44</sup> Others exploit the populations’ fears of increasing Islamist terrorism, espe-

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<sup>42</sup> Matthew d’Ancona, “Brexit: How a Fringe Idea Took Hold of the Tory Party,” *Guardian*, June 15, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Curtis, “Europe’s Populist Challenge Is Far from Over,” *Commentator*, March 22, 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Matt Golder, “Explaining Variation in the Success of Extreme Right Parties in Europe,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 2003b.

cially as some disaffected Muslim youth across Europe—radicalized by the Islamic State—have joined and returned from the war in Syria.<sup>45</sup> Immigration is one of the main reasons why voters said they supported ultranationalist groups,<sup>46</sup> a claim that is supported by research associating immigration levels and rhetoric around those levels with right-wing party support.<sup>47</sup>

Minority groups, particularly those that threaten the supposed ethnic or religious purity of a population, are also a target for ultranationalists.<sup>48</sup> For instance, the National Front took a strong stance in the debates about Muslim women veiling in public in France and “imposing” Muslim values on French society. In Eastern Europe, where there is less immigration from within or outside of Europe, indigenous minority groups (such as Muslims, Jews, and Roma) are targeted in a similar fashion. Minority groups join immigrants as scapegoats for unemployment and economic challenges and are blamed for taking advantage of the welfare system without adequately paying into it. One particular study shows that support for many far-right parties in Europe is a reaction by the majority population to liberal policies that institute protections for minorities.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> “Most European ISIS Fighters Come from France, Germany, UK—Study,” RT News, April 1, 2016; Alison Smale and Stephen Castle, “Attack in France Fuels Anti-Immigrant Parties on Europe’s Right,” *New York Times*, July 16, 2016; and Michael Kaplan, “Muslims Fear Backlash After Brussels Attack: Far-Right, Anti-Immigrant Sentiment Often Follows Violence,” *International Business Times*, March 22, 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Matt Golder, “Electoral Institutions, Unemployment and Extreme Right Parties: A Correction,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2003a; and Han Werts, Peer Scheepers, and Marcel Lubbers, “Euro-Scepticism and Radical Right-Wing Voting in Europe, 2002–2008: Social Cleavages, Socio-Political Attitudes and Contextual Characteristics Determining Voting for the Radical Right,” *European Union Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Alina Polyakova, “The Backward East? Explaining Differences in Support for Radical Right Parties in Western and Eastern Europe,” *Journal of Comparative Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2015a, p. 66.

<sup>48</sup> Jens Rydgren, “The Sociology of the Radical Right,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 33, 2007, p. 245.

<sup>49</sup> Lenka Bustikova, “Revenge of the Radical Right,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 12, 2014.

These attacks on immigrants and minorities are often accompanied by an appeal to cultural tradition. Much ultranationalist rhetoric is that of cultural loss or purity, in terms of language, religion, or tradition. Sometimes, cultural heritage is framed in terms of loss, but it also is framed more positively in terms of cultural pride or purity. Such positions can have impacts in the international realm when political actors ally over shared values (e.g., Russia and the European right wing) or the positions lead to international contestations born from perceived repression internally or intolerance toward neighbors (e.g., in India and Pakistan).

As demonstrated in the Brexit vote, ultranationalist views consider international institutions and norms as threats to national sovereignty. In the United States, these views often involve suspicion or disapproval of the U.N. In Europe, far-right parties in the 1980s originally were strong supporters of European integration; however, many of those and similar groups now espouse anti-integration and anti-EU policies.<sup>50</sup> Many ultranationalist organizations gain supporters by advocating for nation-first, protectionist policies. Economically and militarily, this tendency may become evident in isolationism and campaigning against international free trade agreements.<sup>51</sup> Opposition to such agreements is not limited to the right or left wing but is often associated with a wide array of organizations at the more extreme ends of the spectrum.<sup>52</sup>

### Nationalism in India

India presents a very different sort of case study in the recent growth of nationalist sentiment, because most of that sentiment is directed inward rather than outward. The primary form of extreme nationalism in India is Hindu nationalism, and rather than being a small outsider party, this movement is very mainstream. The governing Bharatiya

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<sup>50</sup> Werts, Scheepers, and Lubbers, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Edward D. Mansfield and Diana C. Mutz, "Support for Free Trade: Self-Interest, Socio-tropic Politics, and Out-Group Anxiety," *International Organization*, Vol. 63, No. 2, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Miriam González Durántez, "Free Trade Has Won: Adapt or Die Is the Only Option Left to Us," *Guardian*, April 16, 2016.



Janata Party and its largest coalition partner, Shiv Sena, are both avowedly Hindu nationalist. At the movement's core is the concept of Hindutva, or "Hinduness." According to this ideology, what defines a Hindu is not simply religious adherence but a common nation, a common race, and a common civilization—a view that arose largely in reaction to Muslim political activism in the early 20th century. The Bharatiya Janata Party has slowly grown in power and popular support, although it is aided in this ascent by India's first-past-the-post system and the party's alliance with Shiv Sena, which frequently does better in state-level than national-level elections.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has adopted policies similar to those of some nationalist parties in Europe, sometimes targeting minorities by prioritizing the majority culture in law. In India, this includes a proposed ban on the slaughter, possession, sale, or consumption of beef; a Hindu shrine placed on the site of a (since torn-down) historical Muslim site; a uniform civil code that would no longer recognize Sharia law; and required demonstrations of loyalty to the state by minority populations. Although waves of immigration are not as high as in Europe, India's leading party also advocates very strict rules about migrants, particularly those coming from Bangladesh, unless they happen to be Hindu, displaying the same sort of cultural protectionist model that UKIP and the National Front ascribe to.<sup>53</sup>

Hindu nationalists are found in formal but nonpolitical organizations that promote the ideology. These include such groups as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or National Volunteers' Organization, whose "stated goal was to unite Hindus and restore national pride after centuries of Muslim invasions and foreign rule."<sup>54</sup> Although its exact numbers are not recorded, it is estimated that the organization has between 4 million and 5 million members in India and across the Indian diaspora, providing a ready set of broad support for political parties with similar views. Local organizations work with trade unions,

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<sup>53</sup> Sanjoy Majumder, "Why an Indian Student Has Been Arrested for Sedition," *BBC*, February 15, 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Rama Lakshmi, "Inside the RSS, India's Hindu Nationalist Movement, Where Modi Got His Start," *Washington Post*, June 7, 2014.

provide social services, and are committed to spreading the teaching of Sanskrit and converting non-Hindus.<sup>55</sup> While most of this work is more peaceful, there have been historical instances of anti-Muslim violence, with riots in 2002 and 2013. Even so, intercommunal violence appears to be on the rise, with 30 percent more attacks in 2015 than the previous year.<sup>56</sup>

### **Conclusion: Nationalism and the Order**

While it is unlikely that any major Western—or even Indian—government will soon be dominated by an extreme, ultranationalist, populist party, the rise in support for such groups as the U.S. tea party and the French National Front has the potential to affect the international world order. That such organizations have begun to gain more legitimacy and credibility indicates a growth in popular discontent with such issues as immigration, elitism, and international trade deals. When discontent is high, mainstream parties may find themselves moving to more-extreme positions to accommodate voters and avoid losing power to smaller parties. First-order effects could include the following:

- economic isolationism and the avoidance or disruption of trade agreements, as seen in both the far right's and the far left's resistance to the TPP in the U.S. 2016 election cycle
- political isolationism, including a hesitance to engage in activities, such as peacekeeping, that are led by the U.N. or regional organizations
- a growing skepticism and distrust of international organizations, up to and including attempting to leave them—for example, the rise of Eurosceptics in the European Parliament and the United Kingdom's referendum on leaving the EU

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<sup>55</sup> Anahita Mukherji, "Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh 'Shakha' Spreads Its Wings to 39 Countries," *Times of India*, December 21, 2015.

<sup>56</sup> Divya Arya, "Are Hindu Nationalists a Danger to Other Indians?" BBC, August 12, 2015.

- a rise in policies that alter or limit the current flows of immigration and asylum seekers, which would have transnational effects, particularly in countries where populations rely heavily on remittances from such workers.

Such outcomes could serve to undermine the more socially and economically liberal foundation on which the postwar order is based. Developing nations that have relied on Europe and the United States for support and assistance may be more incentivized to look to other regional or global powers to make up the slack, shifting some of the balance away from a Western-centric system of international values to one that begins to be dominated more by China or Russia. And although these two nations are not particularly friendly to other cultures internally, they are making efforts to develop strong reputations as economic and military partners internationally.

The rise of nationalism in Europe also fashions a space for Russia, in particular, to gain support within Europe. The purist, Eurosceptic, and socially conservative values often espoused by extreme right-wing groups across Europe are mirrored and championed by the mainstream Russian political apparatus.<sup>57</sup> In addition to ideological alignment, there are reports that the Kremlin is actively funding many far-right parties in Europe, including the National Front, Jobbik in Hungary, Golden Dawn in Greece, and the Northern League in Italy.<sup>58</sup> The organizations already often adopt a pro-Russian stance on many issues, and should they continue to grow in popularity, there may be greater pressures on European governments to engage less with NATO or be less firm on Russian aggressions around the world.

Nationalism, then, poses a potential threat to the countries—especially the Western democracies—that participate in the international order. Especially if immigration and refugee populations continue to expand, the threat may become more severe via both direct effects of increased political and economic isolationism and a slow

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<sup>57</sup> Polyakova, 2015a.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Foster, “Russia Accused of Clandestine Funding of European Parties as U.S. Conducts Major Review of Vladimir Putin’s Strategy,” *Telegraph*, January 16, 2016.

undermining of the solidarity of institutions, such as the EU. Monitoring the signs of increased support for and legitimacy of nationalist parties and organizations will be important in gauging the degree of impact and the direction of current trends.

## Foundations of Order: Geopolitics and Ideology

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Chapters Two through Seven traced several leading categories of data and information that help assess the current health of the postwar liberal international order. After this analysis, our basic conclusion is simple: According to nearly all quantifiable measures, the underlying institutions, processes, and intended outcomes of the order remain relatively stable—or at least remained so until about 2013 to 2015, when fluctuations in the data created questions that will take some time to answer.

Yet in formulating this report, we could not escape the growing sense that a range of less quantifiable factors suggests that the order may be in more danger than the quantifiable categories suggest. These risks are more prospective in that they have so far not created significant divergences from long-term trends in such areas as conflict, global economic activity, or the participation and effectiveness of global institutions. And yet there can be little doubt that several major trends have begun that, if carried to a more extreme conclusion, would undermine the coherence of the order. In this chapter, we survey these trends and suggest their possible implications for the international order. These trends provide a means of estimating whether short-term variation in key issue areas will produce dangerous outcomes in the long-run.

In particular, we are concerned about two broad trends. One is the shifting of geopolitical tectonic plates under the order. For example, U.S. power has provided the essential glue of the postwar order. As that power and influence wane—or, just as important, are *perceived* to wane—the basis for the order comes into question. As the order

becomes more multipolar in general terms, it must adjust to the preferences of rising states; such processes of adjustment are never easy for orders. The other trend is ideological: A neoliberal consensus has underpinned the postwar order, a consensus now under challenge from many fronts. If the economic and political ideas animating the order fragment, the order will not be far behind. The recent U.S. election is a signal development in this regard.

Henry Kissinger has recognized the need for geopolitics and ideology to go hand in hand in sustaining orders. Equilibrium works best if it is buttressed by an agreement on common values. The balance of power inhibits the *capacity* to overthrow the international order; agreement on shared values inhibits the *desire* to overthrow the international order. Power without legitimacy tempts tests of strength; legitimacy without power tempts empty posturing.<sup>1</sup>

Kissinger's analysis emphasizes the same two structural underpinnings for an order: (1) power, or geopolitical balances, and (2) values, or ideology. A major concern going forward is that both of these measures of the health of an order may be becoming degraded at the same time, leading to a potential crisis of both the strength and legitimacy of the postwar order.

One of the underlying themes of this chapter is the potential for counter-orders to emerge that would challenge the monopoly on influence and ideology of the existing order. So far, no state or bloc of states has tried to establish a clearly defined counter-order since the end of the Cold War. Even the Soviet Union was not in a position to promote a true counter-order: Its alliance and geopolitical system was based on coercion, and it was apparent by the 1970s that the Soviet Union's socioeconomic system offered no meaningful alternative to neoliberalism. Therefore, for nearly half a century, the political and technical institutions of the current order, the geopolitical critical mass supporting it, and the neoliberal ideological consensus on which it rests have been largely unchallenged. This need not be the case going forward, and there may be the potential for alternative counter-orders to emerge. Possible examples may include, but are not limited to, a

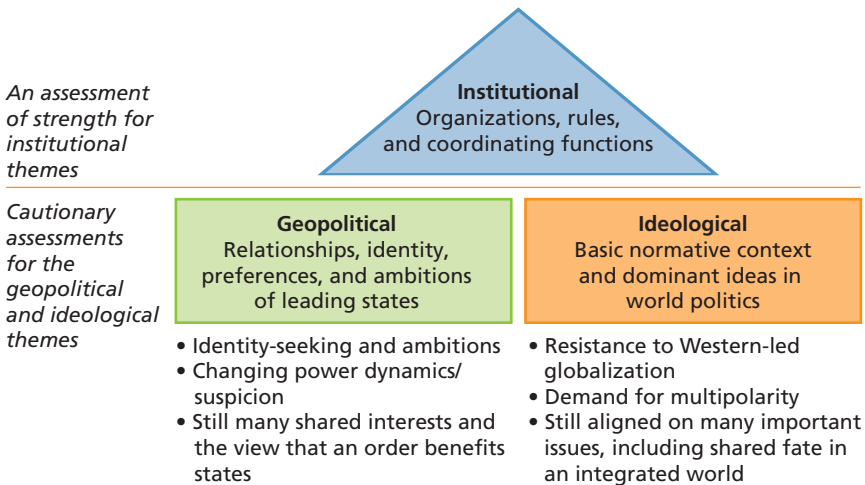
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<sup>1</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994, p. 77.

China-centric order of illiberal mercantilist states, an Islamist order based on expanding Sharia law, or an order based on nationalistic and protectionist rejection of the order's essential cosmopolitanism and economic liberalism.

In identifying possible qualitative factors that can affect the health of orders, we were guided by historical cases and the lessons they suggest about the categories that must be assessed to understand the evolving state of an order. In particular, we used three factors outlined in Susan Pedersen's history of the League of Nations as a shorthand summary of many historical accounts. She identifies three basic variables: the health of an order's *institutions*, the *geopolitical forces and trends* that affect the order, and the *ideological consensus or divergence* under way at any given time.<sup>2</sup> Figure 8.1 summarizes this basic analytical framework and some of the major themes that relate to each area.

**Figure 8.1**  
**Components of the Health of International Orders**



SOURCE: RAND application of the framework in Pedersen, 2015.

RAND RR1994-8.1

<sup>2</sup> Pedersen, 2015, pp. 293, 296–297, 394–407.

The preceding chapters have evaluated the institutional theme and found that, in terms of participation and effectiveness, there is no compelling evidence that the order is collapsing, at least as of 2010 through 2014, the latest period for which we have a significant set of data. Next, we examine aspects of the geopolitical and ideological factors. Their lesson is clear: *There are growing reasons for concern that trends in both of these areas have begun chipping away at the foundations of the order*, in ways that could have significant long-term effects. Figure 8.1 therefore reflects cautionary assessments—yellow indicators—for those two themes.

## Geopolitical Trends

In geopolitics, two major trends point to a concern for the future stability of the order: a broad shift toward a more multipolar order and the rise of explicit Chinese and Russian ambitions for regional dominance.

### Shifting Balances of Power

This theme borrows insights from classical international relations theory. Hegemonic stability and power transition theory both suggest that it becomes difficult to sustain the norms and institutions of existing orders when the balance of strength and influence among the leading powers is shifting significantly.<sup>3</sup> Hegemonic stability theory points to the value of a single dominant provider of order, whether in economics or security affairs. Arguments for U.S. primacy have borrowed the basic insight and contended that the move to a more multi-

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<sup>3</sup> See Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981; Robert Keohane, "The Theory of Hegemonic Stability and Changes in International Economic Regimes," in Oli Holsti, R. Siverson, and Alexander George, eds., *Change in the International System*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1980; and Duncan Snidal, "The Limits of Hegemonic Stability Theory," *International Organization*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Autumn 1985. Fundamental works on power transition theory—arguments about the relationship of shifting patterns of global power and conflict—include Gilpin, 1981; George Modelski, "The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation State," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, No. 20, April 1978; and A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics*, 2nd ed., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968.



polar arrangement would be dangerous.<sup>4</sup> These works suggest that history points to the dangers of transitional periods in global balances of power, especially for maintaining existing orders. The collapse of many previous orders is powerfully related to the emergence of new powers on the scene—or a dramatic shift among the leading powers of an order.

We appear to be in the process of a similar historic transition, the shift from a U.S.-dominated post–Cold War world to a much more multipolar situation. There is abundant evidence that in both objective measures (such as GDP and regional military capabilities) and perceptions of leading powers, the global balance of power is becoming less unipolar.<sup>5</sup> The rise of China is only one of several factors that contribute to this perception. In a 2017 white paper, the European Commission referred to these trends, noting that “Europe’s place in the world is shrinking, as other parts of the world grow.” By 2060, the paper noted, Europe will represent *less than 5 percent* of the world’s population. By 2030, the EU’s share of the global economy will fall to between 15 and 20 percent, down from 26 percent in 2004 and 22 percent in 2015. Just between 2015 and 2017, the report forecast, the U.S. dollar and euro will fall from 60 percent of the global basket of reserve currencies to 51 percent, a trend likely to continue.<sup>6</sup>

Most broadly, this shift in power reflects an epochal change—a movement away from the 200-year pattern of the dominance of the West in the international order and toward the rise of a more balanced international system in which equal power and influence is flowing to the East (to China and other rising states in Asia) but also diffusing

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<sup>4</sup> See William Wohlforth, “The Stability of a Unipolar World,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Summer 1999; William Wohlforth, “Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,” *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1, January 2009; and Mark S. Sheetz and Michael Mastanduno, “Debating the Unipolar Moment,” *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 3, Winter 1997–1998. Barry R. Posen argues for differences between bipolar and multipolar systems without contending that one is necessarily less stable (see Barry R. Posen, “Emerging Multipolarity: Why Should We Care?” *Current History*, November 2009).

<sup>5</sup> For one semi-official summary of this argument, see National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030*, Washington, D.C.: Director of National Intelligence, 2012, pp. 15–19.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, “White Paper in the Future of Europe,” March 2017, p. 8.

more broadly to key players in the southern hemisphere.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to exaggerate how fundamental such a shift will be to the foundations of the postwar order. From its inception, the order has been U.S.-led, U.S.-designed (in large measure), and increasingly—especially since 1989—reflecting the values and preferences of key democratic U.S. allies in Europe and Asia.

The implications for the future of the order could be concerning. A more multipolar context will demand shifts in how states are represented within the order's institutions to accommodate the interests of a broader range of more-powerful states. It could also lay the groundwork for instability; if the order cannot adjust and give states the influence they feel they deserve, more states may challenge the norms and rules of the existing order and create alternative institutions without necessarily being able to generate a coherent alternative. This trend is already well under way with the growing demands of leading states for a more significant voice in the order's rules and reform of its major institutions (cataloged in Chapter Six).

The coming years will therefore represent a major test of the idea that the institutions of order can be binding or “sticky” in geopolitical terms. There are persuasive reasons to believe that institutions rely on the power of the order-leading states and exercise limited influence outside that relationship.<sup>8</sup> A critical question is whether rising states will agree to bind their power in the way the United States did. If we accept the basic proposition that rising powers seek more prestige and influence and expand their power to do so, it would demand a powerful exception for China, India, and others to refer or abandon specific power-related claims in the name of a constitutional order.<sup>9</sup>

The question this trend raises, though, is whether the order can integrate the views and demands of more leading powers or whether

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<sup>7</sup> For an account that places this shift in the context of evolving international orders, see Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present*, New York: Penguin Books, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Randall L. Schweller, “The Problem of International Order Revisited,” *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Summer 2001, p. 163.

<sup>9</sup> Schweller, 2001, p. 174.

the centrifugal forces involved in the shifting balance will ultimately rip the order apart. Part of the answer will be supplied by the degree of differing interests and goals among leading powers. China and Russia, for example, demand that any order designed to reflect great-power interests respect their own local spheres of influence, whereas the United States views such spheres as a violation of key principles on which the order has been founded.

Moreover, an order's legitimacy undergoes rising challenges the further it stretches from its originating justification. Orders often represent the normative and institutional efforts to reorganize world politics after major upheavals, especially wars.<sup>10</sup> The post-1945 (and even post-1989) sense of a need for such formal reconfiguration seems a distant memory, and the legitimacy conveyed to the order by that requirement is fading. (This appears to be occurring to some degree even in Europe, where the EU's founding rationale no longer has the unifying force it once did.) The order must be reconfigured once again, this time without the justifying and coalescing power of a recent conflict. The geopolitical challenge faced by leaders of the order today is substantial: Build the fourth major ordering system of the modern era—after the Concert of Europe; the League of Nations; and the postwar, U.N.-centric order—without such a basis.

### **The Burgeoning Ambitions of Dissatisfied States**

A second geopolitical theme brings pointed meaning to the rise of alternative centers of power. As suggested earlier, China and Russia could be described as dissatisfied with the present regional power balances in their neighborhoods, as well as by the rules or principles that the U.S.-led order forces on them. These countries have very specific objectives, beginning with the shared goal of being respected as the leading power in their region, that they intend to press regardless of the implications for the order.

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew F. Cooper and Alan S. Alexandroff, "Introduction," in Alan S. Alexandroff and Andrew F. Cooper, eds., *Rising States, Rising Institutions: Challenges for Global Governance*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010.

These unfulfilled ambitions reflect another leading challenge to the current order. One of the most important questions about the order, in fact, is whether it can incorporate the ambitions of these two increasingly aggressive states—as well as those of other rising or increasingly aggressive states, such as India, Turkey, and Brazil. It is not clear that the order can do this, especially where there are territorial disputes. If it cannot, the rising ambitions of these powers, especially China and Russia, will pose a fatal challenge to the order.

In the process, this trend could pave the way for China to attempt to erect a parallel order—the first of three possible counter-orders that we examine in this chapter. As explained in Chapter Three, China has already begun investing in parallel institutions in the economic sphere, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. It seems a natural progression, as China's regional ambitions increase, for Beijing to expand on this base and accelerate its efforts to build institutions and socialize norms that reflect its own preferences. Chinese analysts are well aware that the postwar order largely reflects U.S. preferences and interests, and although many elements of that order effectively serve China's goals, it may be that Beijing will live in a U.S.-constructed order for only so long.<sup>11</sup>

A Sino-centric counter-order could have a number of leading characteristics. It would attempt to shift Asian—and, to some extent, global—economic policy into Chinese-led institutions, specifically for development aid and capital market stability. It would explicitly endorse a range of governance models and welcome illiberal states as long as they were willing to play by the very limited rules of the institutions. It would not, for example, attempt to use the desire for institutional membership to impose standards of behavior in such areas as corruption or human rights. A Sino-centric order could also be more attractive to Russia, which seeks greater control and autonomy within

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<sup>11</sup> A powerful statement of a skeptical view of China's position in the order was offered by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2016 Report to Congress*, Washington, D.C., November 2016. The report concluded that "China continues to violate the letter and spirit" of international trade obligations and that hopes for a "responsible stakeholder" model of development that "upholds and strengthens the rules-based liberal world order have not been met" (p. vii).

its sphere of influence. It would promote a different model of state development, accepting higher degrees of mercantilism and domestic protection in trade policy, either implicitly under the continuing rules of the WTO or through an alternative model that attempts to compete with some rules and standards of the U.S.-led system. And it would attempt to entice states in the region away from their alliance relationships, formal or informal, with the United States, creating a Sino-centric security order in the region.

Such a counter-order remains years away, at best. In part, this is because of the limits to China's entrepreneurialism in strategy; it still hesitates to seize leadership roles on many issues and lacks sufficient resources to become a global leader on most. It is also partly because of the interests of regional powers; they know very well that, as is sometimes said, China can rule but it cannot partner; a Sino-centric security order would reflect some degree of enhanced Chinese preeminence and demand deference from others in the region. In fact, the reactions of many states in Southeast Asia suggest that a Sino-centric order is further off than it was a decade ago, because the perception of the Chinese threat has grown significantly.

## **Ideological Trends**

The danger posed by ideological changes may be even more fundamental than that posed by geopolitical trends. All orders rely on some degree of shared values by leading members. These do not have to be progressive values—the Concert of Europe was grounded in a conservatism shared by Europe's monarchies. But the leading powers must have a roughly agreed sense of the world they are trying to create and the purpose of the order. As two leading scholars have argued, "No enduring political order can exist without a substantial sense of community and shared identity. Political identity and community and political structure are mutually dependent." Specifically, at the heart of the postwar order has been a sort of cosmopolitan civic identity that exists beyond "national, ethnic, and religious identity." This civic identity reflects a "consensus around a set of norms and principles, most

importantly political democracy, constitutional government, individual rights, private property-based economic systems, and toleration of diversity in non-civic areas of ethnicity and religion.”<sup>12</sup>

The postwar order was grounded in at least three shared values (only one of which seems to remain relatively healthy): territorial integrity and nonaggression to resolve disputes; a neoliberal model of economic development; and, at least for some states, liberal political values of human rights and democratic governance. More fundamentally, the postwar order reflected the explosion of globalization that took place in the postwar, and especially post–Cold War, world. In many ways, the order is as much a reflection of the socioeconomic consensus of a globalizing world as it is a geopolitical construct.

The current order, then, can be seen as a subsidiary process or effect of a much larger trend—as Ikenberry has put it, the “liberal ascendancy” that has characterized world politics over the past two centuries.<sup>13</sup> This has energized global trade integration, the rise of human rights as an international norm, the emphasis on the rule of law and effective governance, and related aspects of the order.

In a world witnessing a significant rebellion against globalization, it is not clear whether this essential consensus will remain in place. In Chapter Six, we surveyed trends in public opinion that could challenge the essential ideological foundations of an order built on globalization. These trends include a growing skepticism of trade and immigration, growing nationalism, and xenophobia. The basic consensus on the value of a more integrated world, reflected in a deepening set of rules, norms, and institutions established in the common interest, is

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<sup>12</sup> Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, April 1999, p. 193.

<sup>13</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “The Three Faces of Liberal Internationalism,” in Alan S. Alexandroff and Andrew F. Cooper, eds., *Rising States, Rising Institutions: Challenges for Global Governance*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010, p. 17. He defines the ideological agreements of the current order as “open markets, international institutions, cooperative security, democratic community, progressive change, collective problem solving, shared sovereignty,” and “the rule of law.”

under serious challenge.<sup>14</sup> One recent treatment referred to the “global [populist] movement built on a seemingly bottomless reserve of political, economic and cultural grievance” that is “bent on upending the existing world order.”<sup>15</sup> The *Economist* recently concluded, “It is clear that an exclusive, often ethnically-based, form of nationalism is on the march.”<sup>16</sup>

The ideological revolt is especially challenging because it appears to be so fundamental and broad-based.<sup>17</sup> Populations and leadership groups around the world are losing faith in a globalizing, integrating system, for a range of reasons.<sup>18</sup> Some no longer trust that such a system will bring prosperity, and they view trade as a rising threat to their economic well-being. Others now doubt the value of the free flow of labor through immigration, seeing more danger in the process than value. Many individuals see cosmopolitan globalization as a cultural threat.

The recent Brexit vote in the United Kingdom offers an obvious and powerful example of this ideological trend.<sup>19</sup> Voters appear

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<sup>14</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “Populism on the March: Why the West Is in Trouble,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2016; Cas Mudde, “Europe’s Populist Surge: A Long Time in the Making,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2016; and Pankaj Mishra, “The Globalization of Rage,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Griff Witte, Emily Rauhala, and Dom Phillips, “Trump’s Win May Be Just the Beginning of a Global Populist Wave,” *Washington Post*, November 13, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> “League of Nationalists,” *Economist*, November 19, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Galston, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> See Robert J. Samuelson, “Globalization at Warp Speed,” *Washington Post*, August 30, 2015; “The End of Globalization?” *Washington Post*, September 20, 2015; Dani Rodrik, “The Politics of Anger,” *Social Europe*, March 11, 2016; Emile Simpson, “This Is How the Liberal World Order Ends,” *Foreign Policy*, February 19, 2016; Lawrence Summers, “What’s Behind the Revolt Against Global Integration?” *Washington Post*, April 10, 2016a; T. X. Hammes, “The End of Globalization? The International Security Implications,” *War on the Rocks*, August 2, 2016; and Robert J. Samuelson, “The (Largely False) Globalization Narrative,” *Washington Post*, August 7, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> For recent evidence on the public opinion behind Brexit and its connection to the larger ideological trend, see Don Lee, “Will ‘Brexit’ Mark the End of the Age of Globalization?” *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 2016; Larry Elliott, “Brexit Is a Rejection of Globalisation,” *Guardian*, June 26, 2016; Jeffrey D. Sachs, “Brexit Is a Symbol of Globalization’s Deeper Ills,” *Boston Globe*, June 27, 2016; and Mireya Solis, “Brexit, Twilight of Globalization? Not Quite, Not Yet,” Brookings Institution, June 27, 2016.

to have been concerned about two fundamental issues: the power of unelected and foreign international bodies and the flood of migration that has washed over Europe in the past decade, partly as a result of the free movement of people required by the EU. The vote reflected a resurgence of nationalistic feeling and a willingness to risk significant economic costs in order to reject some of the costs of globalization.

What is especially dangerous about this rebellion is that, as the Brexit vote indicates, it links significant segments of populations in the developing and developed world alike, from Islamic fundamentalists concerned with globalization's secularizing tendencies to Brexit advocates worried about EU dominance of British life to Trump supporters in the United States angry about unfair trade practices and worried about the security implications of immigration. This is a broad-based movement that joins many disparate, and sometimes mutually exclusive, concerns and demands in an argument against an integrating world—and by extension, against the international order that reflects, accelerates, and enforces that integration.<sup>20</sup>

Arguably, the most concerning trend is the rise of “authoritarian populism” in many countries, such as Russia, Turkey, India, Venezuela, and Brazil.<sup>21</sup> One of the most prominent departures from long-term stability in trend lines in the past few years has been a dip in global measures of democracy and the rise of undemocratic ruling parties, sometimes accompanied by changes to governance rules or structures designed to lock in authoritarian systems. The relationship between democracy and some elements of the order is not clear: Even authoritarian states might continue to cooperate on such issues as counterterrorism, climate, piracy, and even trade. But the postwar order was designed to promote liberal values over time, and some empirical evidence connects authoritarian governance to higher levels of international dispute and conflict and lower levels of cooperation. What is

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<sup>20</sup> Martin Jacques, “The Death of Neoliberalism and the Crisis of Western Politics,” *Guardian*, August 21, 2016; Samuelson, 2016; Martin Wolf, “Capitalism and Democracy: The Strain Is Showing,” *Financial Times*, August 30, 2016; and Richard C. Longworth, “Globalization's Political Earthquake,” Chicago Council on Global Affairs, August 16, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> For one recent discussion, see Kanchan Chandra, “Authoritarian India,” *Foreign Affairs*, June 16, 2016.



especially concerning about the latest burst of nondemocratic regimes is their particularly populist and sometimes nationalist character, which is arguably making them more suspicious of a Western-led order and more willing to take disruptive actions.

Along with economic issues and U.S. leadership, then, the rise of authoritarian populism may prove to be one of the fundamental determinants of the equilibrium of the order. The signs, for the moment, are a cause for concern.

Part of the challenge for the order going forward is to resolve arguably the most significant tension in its values: the clash between the norm of territorial sovereignty and the emerging norm or value of protecting populations and quashing local instability. The collision of sovereignty and the responsibility-to-protect principle is one of the fundamental narratives of the past two decades in world politics—and it echoes, in important ways, similar tensions over sovereignty that bedeviled both the Concert of Europe and the League of Nations. The narrative has special resonance because of its connection to geopolitical issues. Most of the other leading powers outside Europe—not only China and Russia but also India, Brazil, and others—nurture deep suspicions of the responsibility-to-protect principle and other order-related values that compromise sovereignty. The principle has never been fully embraced even in Europe and the United States, and it faces an uphill battle in the wake of the 2011 intervention in Libya. But the goals of the responsibility-to-protect principle, including easing instability that can engulf whole regions and addressing proliferation and terrorism risks, are important for a stable order. Resolving this tension will be exceptionally difficult to do without either abandoning the concerns that animate the principle or continually confronting regional powers whose support is indispensable to the order.

In addition to the Sino-centric order mentioned earlier, a second possible counter-order could emerge from these trends: a coalition of states that embrace nationalist, protectionist, and xenophobic foreign policies directly counter to the internationalizing and neoliberal ideological assumptions of the current order. This order is unlikely to be organized, but it would reflect dozens of informal examples of coordination by nations anxious to slow the integrationist process. It may not

reflect anything as coherent as an order at all. More likely would be a future of Brexit-like events—a future in which this ideological reaction works as a destabilizing factor, undermining the enforcement of existing rules and norms, sapping the energy from global institutions, and obstructing cooperation on new issues.

### **An Islamist Challenge**

Another important ideological challenge could come from regimes and movements committed to the inexorable and global spread of Islam as a universal faith and determined to overthrow any elements of an existing order that oppose that goal.

This, of course, remains a minority opinion within Islam. The vast majority of Muslim governments and peoples—in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, as well as Muslim minorities in India, Germany, the United States, and other places—enjoy the benefits of stable domestic and international systems. These governments and peoples have proven an ability to operate within the rules, norms, and institutions of the current system. There is no essential conflict between Islam and the postwar order, just as there is no essential conflict between the order and any particular faith.

Yet it cannot be denied that, over the past 20 to 30 years, a radical strain of Islam that rejects this basic compromise has taken root and expanded. There are many varieties of even this ideological movement—some endorse violence, for example, and some rejectionist but nonviolent Salafist strains do not. What they have in common, however, is a determination to spread their faith and a conviction that societies that do not reflect Muslim law are bankrupt.

Freedom of religious practice is an essential value reflected in the order's liberalism. But problems can arise when religious movements reject the legitimacy of any order—domestic or international—that is not founded on their own faith and commit themselves to undermining or transforming that order, in some cases by violence. The question is whether the current trend of rising fundamentalist and, in some cases, extremist religiosity leads to movements or governments that place themselves in opposition to the order as a Western, secular violation of their faith.

One small but important and urgent such expression is now well under way. The most obvious resulting collision between radical Islamic movements and the postwar order comes in the form of terrorist groups willing to undertake horrific violence against social institutions to create a revolutionary condition. Such groups as al Qaeda and the Islamic State pose an ongoing threat to the order by generating mechanisms that can undermine both domestic liberalism and international cooperation. They view the values of the order, including liberal political systems, as an abomination, and they are determined to impose fundamentalist religious rule throughout the world.

A potentially greater risk would be if several Muslim governments showed a more open and unalloyed commitment to radical jihadist values. Already, elements within important states—including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey—are quietly or openly committed to the active, persistent, and, if necessary, forcible spread of Islam. So far, these governments have remained firmly engaged with the institutions of the postwar order: Pakistan is active in the U.N. and with the IMF; Turkey remains a NATO member and, at least until recently, has actively sought EU membership. But if some of these governments, perhaps joined by newly radicalized states emerging from the current chaos in the region, formed a bloc of states that began diverging from the order to pursue a form of militant religious advocacy, it could further unravel the order's coherence.

The odds remain against any outcome that extreme. For one thing, the gravitational pull of the order remains powerful even for such states as Pakistan: Without IMF support, foreign aid, and trade, the Pakistani economy would likely collapse. Moreover, those governments so far remain a complex mix of religious stalwarts, pragmatists, and secular technocrats and have not taken a formally oppositional stance to the order. Much more likely is a religious version of the gray-zone challenges of the major dissatisfied powers in which states work around the edges of the order's rules and norms to promote the spread of Islam without directly attacking the order.

What shape this would take remains to be seen, and it may be that the current wave of Islamist geopolitical expression has already reached a

peak. Even regimes reflecting significant religious influence may remain largely supportive of and engaged in the order. But there is at least a chance that more nations could come to reflect profoundly Islamist governance values and that they may choose to challenge the existing order's rules, values, and institutions far more directly, and as a bloc.

## **Conclusion: Causes for Worry**

The death of an order can occur either through major catastrophic events, such as wars, or through the gradual accumulation of a thousand smaller cuts. The gravitational pull of the current order, the economic benefits that states enjoy from membership, and the forces the order can rally in defending against outright attacks ought to be sufficient to rule out most large-scale direct challenges. Already, however, dissatisfied regimes and movements are chipping away at the order in a sort of slow-motion fragmentation. It may be that the emergence of a significantly more multipolar geopolitical context—the long-awaited end of the West's global dominance—combined with a widespread rejection of globalization represent the two most profound challenges the postwar order has yet faced.

The most-important foundation stones of the postwar order—the geopolitical realities and ideological current on which it was based—are therefore under significant pressure. These trends have not yet manifested themselves in the measurable indicators of order we have summarized in the other chapters of this report. They could, however, be responsible for the early signs of wobbling evidence since 2013 in such areas as conflict, trade integration, and public opinion on trade and immigration.

In this connection, the concept of increasing returns can have various implications. In theory, we could say that the increasing returns ought to deepen the existing order if it is truly path-dependent. Douglass C. North's analysis of institutions suggests that a deeply interde-

pendent web of them can produce strong momentum.<sup>22</sup> But a major theme of path dependence and increasing returns is that changes to current patterns can acquire momentum. Early events have a disproportionate effect on outcomes, but they can be early events in a new phase rather than merely a continuation of current patterns.<sup>23</sup> In other words, if the trajectory of world politics begins to veer away from a stable order, that process can begin to exhibit an accelerating speed characteristic of a process of increasing returns.

This danger creates a particular challenge for U.S. policy. The United States needs to respond to enough of the low-level activities to shore up the order and prevent its gradual dissolution—but the order's leading power cannot overreact in ways that do more harm than good. Balancing these considerations will be a consistent theme of U.S. national security strategy.

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<sup>22</sup> Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. For a brief version of the core analysis of institutional character, see Douglass C. North, "Institutions," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 1991.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94, No. 2, June 2000, pp. 251–253.



## Summing Up: The State of the Order

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In this report, we have surveyed a wide range of indicators of the health of the postwar, rule-based international order. As noted in the introduction, accurately assessing such indicators in relation to U.S. goals can be difficult. Put another way, assessing the health of the order cannot come down to a single objective value. Indicators can point in competing directions, and determining the health of the order ultimately requires a value judgment of which factors are most important to achieving U.S. interests. Inevitably, therefore, as much as this evaluation has attempted to introduce as much data as possible, the final determination must reflect a qualitative judgment. Moreover, the variables assessed in this report reflect only one set of indicators of the health of the order; there are, of course, other potential indicators that we did not include.

In regard to the variables assessed here, the preceding data and analysis would appear to support the following seven broad judgments on the health of the international order.

*First, until recently, measurable indicators of the rule-based order remained broadly stable and did not show evidence of a rapid decline.* Recent analyses have warned of a precipitous decline in the health of the order. In the categories we assessed for this analysis, we did not see such a trend until increasingly destabilizing actions over the past two or three years. In virtually all cases, leading trend lines, in areas rang-

ing from trade to institutional participation to conflict, remained on relatively stable trajectories.<sup>1</sup>

That initial finding mirrors the results of other recent evaluations of order-related trends, including a 2016 survey among global research institute scholars, reported by the Council of Councils.<sup>2</sup> The focus of that survey was not on the international order per se but on levels of international cooperation on major issues. The survey gave an overall grade of B across the range of issues, which had improved from a C the year before—indicating, as with this study, that global coordination remains stable and is not badly waning, at least for now. In examining specific issues, the survey largely parallels our estimate of key issues within the order: Cooperation on climate received an A, perhaps exaggerated by the result of the Paris agreement; nonproliferation an A-minus; development and health a B-plus; trade a B; and managing the global economic system a B-minus. Areas receiving lower grades focused on conflict—internal and external violence, as well as terrorism.

*Second, however, developments since 2014—including Russian aggression in Ukraine, the Brexit vote, the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and the continued influence of far-right parties in Europe—suggest that the order could be in much more peril than the data through 2014 would suggest.* This conclusion is tentative, based on trends that could reverse themselves, and not mature to the degree that some fear (or hope). Evidence outlined in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight demonstrates some degree of the danger of populist outrage and general reaction against the demands of an integrated and rule-based order. This reaction has arguably become more intense where the integration and rule-making have been most advanced, as in Europe. These events give us reason to worry that the short-term fluctuation in several issue areas since 2010 could represent the beginning of destabilizing long-term trends rather than temporary variation.

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<sup>1</sup> We counted a trend or indicator as “healthy” if it was not falling off; this judgment does not imply that we see improvement in most areas, only, at a minimum, stability.

<sup>2</sup> Council of Councils, “Report Card on International Cooperation: 2015–2016,” Council on Foreign Relations, 2016.



One model, offered by Randall Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, suggests a five-phase process of the decline of orders: From stability, an order moves into a “deconcentration and delegitimization of the hegemon’s power”; followed by arms racing and the forming of contrary alliances; a “resolution” of the emerging crisis, “often through hegemonic war”; and “system renewal.”<sup>3</sup> Schweller and Pu make the case for “rightful resistance” to an existing order, whereby challengers who have partially accepted an order for self-serving reasons begin to press against it—not to destroy it, and not in objection to fundamental rules of the game, but over issues of hypocrisy in application of the rules and status issues. The evidence supports a hypothesis that the world has entered the deconcentration and delegitimization phase of the postwar order.

*Third, to the extent that interconnections are apparent from the data, economic variables stand out as the most load-bearing elements of the order.* Measures of economic growth, trade, investment, and integrated capital markets are connected in some way or other with just about every other variable. Based on our research, including new modeling, the relationship between economic factors and dangers to the order—such as declining support for international institutions—is less dramatic than we might have assumed. But in many ways, the foundational promise of the order is economic prosperity. If public and governmental audiences perceive that the order can no longer make this promise, support for its rules, norms, and institutions could be fatally weakened, partly because so many other variables are affected by economic ones.

In this sense, economic growth and stability represent a basic source of equilibrium in the order. Such a finding has obvious historical parallels. In the 1930s, for example, the Great Depression played a critical role in the collapse of the League of Nations and the rise of extreme nationalism in Germany and Japan.

*Fourth, the data suggest specific ways in which the rule-based order has had practical effects to benefit U.S. interests.* The most persuasive empirical research, for example, suggests that global trade institutions

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<sup>3</sup> Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, “After Unipolarity: China’s Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline,” *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Summer 2011.

and rules have both spurred additional trade and reduced trade volatility. Economic institutions, and the underlying norms they promoted, proved critical in managing the effects of the 2008 financial crisis. States continue to rely on treaties of pacific settlement to reduce the incidence of conflict.

*Fifth, beyond the general ideological reaction to the order, the data raise worrying new trends, including evidence that key trends in the order may have begun to turn in negative directions in 2013 or 2014.* As noted in previous chapters, we have begun to see at least slight dips in long-term stable trends, such as trade intensity, conflict battle deaths, and public opinion. No trend line for such major social issues is completely flat; all show spikes and ebbs. It is too early to tell whether the current dip will correct itself and remain within historical ranges or represents the beginning of a more serious long-term decline. The negative indicators are well within the scale of prior variation, at least for the time being. The most we can say at this point is that these trends demand both close watching and policy responses designed to keep them from worsening.

*Sixth, there is evidence in the data to support a claim of liberal overreach.* The order is in the most danger in areas where it has been pushed to the far edges of plausibility. In such areas as liberal interventionism, the reach and extent of EU bureaucracy, and the speed of global trade integration, the data suggest that overly ambitious efforts to advance liberal elements of the order could be destabilizing. The responsibility-to-protect principle and related doctrines of qualified sovereignty have become unpopular in the United States even as conservative powers, such as China and Russia, have long opposed them. The drive for ever-deeper trade integration is slowing, with European governments signaling, for example, a need to pull back on the TPP and the U.S. President declaring opposition to the deal. We may be reaching the natural limits of key elements of the liberal order—namely, the further liberalization of trade and the active promotion of democratic systems.

*Seventh, two powerful qualitative trends—shifting geopolitical balances of power and the emergence of a worldwide antiglobalization narrative—may pose a substantial, indeed historic, threat to a shared international order.* Chapter Eight summarized these risks. Our research

into historical antecedents of the current order suggests that orders rely crucially on supportive geopolitical balances and some degree of ideological agreement among the main sponsoring powers. It is when these foundations begin to crumble that the superstructure of rules, norms, and institutions collapses as well. As we argued in Chapter Eight, there are reasons for very significant concern that ongoing trends are imperiling the stability of the order in a slow-motion fashion that may not have shown up yet in many of the other measures we survey in this analysis. Our analysis strongly suggests that the order is robust enough to sustain some negative impacts, but if negative trends were to accelerate in all three sources of equilibrium—economic indicators, U.S. leadership, and governing systems (via the rise of authoritarian populism)—at the same time, the order could sustain fatal damage.

Kissinger argued recently, “An international order is stable when the desire or need for adjustment can be accommodated without overthrowing the system itself. An order tends toward chaos when its key challenges are to its system: then it evolves with competing versions of equilibrium.” He stresses the need for an “evolutionary stability” to accommodate changing interests without producing chaos.<sup>4</sup> The trends we have evaluated in this report are making that evolutionary stability much more difficult to attain.

## The Importance of Ideas and Beliefs

One theme that emerged from our analysis goes beyond the more quantifiable indicators of the order’s health to something far more ephemeral—but also perhaps ultimately more important. The post-war order has grown up on the foundations of consensus about key norms, values, and concepts of the role of government.<sup>5</sup> These foundations have been basically neoliberal in character and have emphasized liberalization (political as well as economic), openness, tolerance, and internationalism.

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Goldberg, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> See Hale, Held, and Young, 2013, pp. 138–144.

Drezner, for example, contends that it was ideas and beliefs that underwrote a significant degree of effective economic governance after 2008 and prevented the financial crisis from becoming far worse than it was.<sup>6</sup> He contends that support for liberal trade regimes remained strong in nearly all major trading countries. He argues as well that the feared rise of a China-centric alternative to neoliberal ideas and norms has been exaggerated, at least for now. Ultimately, he believes that it was the influence of ideas that played the largest role in underwriting effective economic governance during the crisis and that has helped keep the international economy on track since then.

The role of ideas in international politics has received growing attention in recent years.<sup>7</sup> The combination of national signaling, public opinion, and national behavior summarized in this study lends significant support to the idea that something beyond pure optimization of interests is going on in the evolution of the postwar international order. It clearly reflects a set of ideas about the most-effective approaches to governance and international relations. Arguably, the single most damaging trend would be for these ideas to fray—that is, for the basic consensus undergirding the order, in ideational and normative terms, to collapse.

There is some evidence of such fraying today, and this may amount to one of the most-important trends worth watching in relation to the health of the order. As noted in Chapter Eight, and as surveyed in areas of public and state opinion in Chapters Six and Seven, the broad liberal consensus on open economic orders and liberalizing politics—linked to a rising sense of shared fate and global integration—has now been partly interrupted. Nationalism is challenging global narratives as the fundamental defining mindset of political action.<sup>8</sup> State-directed capitalism, mercantilism, and masked trade protection are achieving new-

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<sup>6</sup> Drezner, 2014, pp. 142–175.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993. A particularly important case study is Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Berger, “Erupting Nationalisms,” *American Interest*, August 31, 2016.

found legitimacy in competition with the neoliberal economic consensus of the postwar era. Illiberal approaches to domestic politics are rising and becoming more popular in the eyes of many populaces.<sup>9</sup>

## Recognizing Danger Signs

An especially difficult challenge in measuring the current and prospective health of an international order is that the danger signs can be difficult to spot. Some earlier breakdowns in the order reflected a long, slow, steady decline but also the sudden emergence of variables that accelerated the collapse of the order. An important analytical question is how to recognize an upcoming inflection point when the apparent stability of an order can give way, quickly and without much warning, to a very different pattern.

A related issue is how to recognize specific events that seem small in themselves but that have significant catalytic potential. To what extent will individual actions affect the order systemically? How does a specific act of aggression ramify elsewhere? What long-term effects does it have on the order? We know that some become outliers, without significant systemic effects. How do we recognize an act or process—in Syria, Ukraine, the South China Sea, or elsewhere—that will set alight a chain reaction that unravels the order?

This question has important policy implications. An action likely to metastasize and challenge the global order demands much more attention than one that represents a temporary, probably self-correcting, disturbance, and the United States should be willing to undertake greater risks to counteract the effects of such an action. This question has recurred throughout the history of U.S. national security policy, of course: During the Cold War, the United States consistently assigned larger meaning to peripheral conflicts and threats because of their allegedly systemic effects.

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<sup>9</sup> Jochen Bittner, “The New Ideology of the New Cold War,” *New York Times*, August 1, 2016. Bittner ironically refers to the new contrary ideology as “orderism”—upholding the value of social order over freedom.

Not knowing whether an action may unravel the order relates to a larger issue of its health: Is the order a coherent whole so that parts reinforce one another—and, if so, how would we know where the centers of gravity lie, the places where changes to the order would have the most effect? Our survey so far does not turn up much evidence of a sort of interlinked super-order in which compromises in one area are rapidly transmitted throughout the system to cause fractures in the whole thing. The order has managed to sustain numerous concessions and compromises over the past half century without fatal damage.

Many of these factors boil down to tests of the resilience of an order. This analysis suggests the following criteria for measuring such resilience:

1. the inherent significance of the issue or event
2. the ability of leading states to respond to challenges (their resource base and capabilities)
3. the willingness of leading states to respond to challenges, both unilaterally and in cooperative fashion
4. the general ability of the order to respond to unexpected crises in coordinated, constructive ways—as it has with recent financial crises, for example
5. the shares of global power wielded by the defenders of order versus the challengers; the problem is that there is no simple calculation for this indicator, because the role of challenger is played by different states on different issues
6. natural sources for recovering to the mean within the system; in the social context of an international order, such sources of natural recovery are likely to be normative in character.

This analysis did not reflect a comprehensive assessment of these criteria. Evidence surveyed in the previous chapters, however, would suggest elements of both reassurance and concern in each criterion. For example, the political support in the United States for global involvement is ebbing to some degree, and the U.S. resource base for exercising such leadership is definitely under pressure. Sources of normative recovery may be under some threat as dissatisfied states push the

boundaries of acceptable behavior under the order further and further from the norm.

## Implications for Policy

In this analysis, we have not sought to offer a comprehensive portrait of the postwar order or its current status. Instead, we have examined several variables and assessed their lessons for the order's health. Even such a partial examination, however, suggests important conclusions and implications for U.S. foreign and national security policy in the years ahead.

These implications extend beyond the conclusions already outlined in this chapter (which are very directly derived from the data) and reflect some degree of inferential judgment on the part of the project analysts. Nonetheless, each of the following implications can be traced to one or more specific findings in the preceding analysis. The importance of U.S. support and engagement, for example, traces to attitudes of other major powers, public opinion data, and the status of U.S.-sponsored institutions, all of which indicate that faith in the legitimacy and credibility of the United States as the order's main sponsor is important to its stability. Furthermore, the need to rethink the elements of the international economic agenda derives directly from public opinion data. Based on the analysis and findings outlined in this report, we offer the following implications for U.S. policy:

1. *The postwar order is at a perilous moment, and U.S. support and engagement over the coming decade will be essential.* Given the multiple signs of stress already in place, were the United States to withdraw its support for alliances, end contributions to international institutions, and abandon free-trade accords, the result could be fatal damage to any concept of a meaningful international order. It is no time to conduct large-scale experiments in U.S. global retrenchment; there are enough worrisome short-term signals that it would seem a very inopportune time to call into question another major source of equilibrium—notably,

the effective leadership of the order's major sponsor. The elements of the order contributing to the decline of conflict include U.S. leadership and alliance structures. Especially with challenges to the order on the rise, there is strong reason to believe that significant retrenchment would create notable instabilities.

2. *Maintaining the stability of global economic markets, institutions, and rules is the indispensable foundation for sustaining the order.* This component of the order is more load-bearing than any other. If global trading networks were to collapse into beggar-thy-neighbor protectionism (that is, when a state enacts economic policies that benefit it but worsen the economic problems of other countries), or even increasingly exclusive regional trading blocs, the effects on a shared global order would be devastating. The challenge is that this conclusion does not necessarily demand urgent passage of the two major regional trade agreements (TPP and TTIP) now on the table. It could be that sustaining current trade agreements, avoiding new rounds of protectionism, and working on issues of trade impacts (through social support programs) and financial stability agreements would be more supportive of the order in the long term.
3. *The strategy for sustaining the economic elements of a shared order must be rethought.* While support for the general benefits of trade remains strong both in the United States and globally, rising skepticism, stalled large-scale trade deals, and evidence of growing inequality in key countries point to the need for a new sort of order-based trade agenda. The goal should be to enhance societies' standards of living and find ways to support vulnerable populations in a globalizing economy.<sup>10</sup> Developments in public opinion, national signaling, and the ideological foundations of the order all point to the fairly urgent need to address its perceived socioeconomic costs and restore the faith

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<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Summers has argued for a program of "responsible nationalism" and a new trade agenda long these lines, but his concept remains embryonic. See, for example, Lawrence Summers, "Voters Deserve Responsible Nationalism, Not Reflex Globalism," *Financial Times*, July 10, 2016b; and Robert Siegel, "Former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers Calls for 'Responsible Nationalism,'" National Public Radio, July 11, 2016.



that major elements of the order enhance prosperity. If the order cannot grow measurably deeper (in such areas as trade, political integration, and military cooperation), the United States should lead an effort to shore up the existing order against backsliding sparked by social and political grievances.

4. *The U.S. alliance structure has been a centerpiece of the order for 70 years.* The alliance structure has helped to maintain stability in key regions for decades. It is the leading security component of the order. The U.S. role in alliances is the most significant symbol of a continuing U.S. commitment to international security. Sustaining and, in fact, deepening alliances should remain a signal priority. However, this task should be undertaken with two new emphases: ensuring that allies do somewhat more to share the burden of global security and building up allied capability and U.S. forward deployments in ways that avoid unnecessarily provoking other leading powers.
5. *The tone and character of U.S. leadership will have to change to sustain the current order.* The undeniable multipolarity of the emerging system, as well as the high sensitivity of populist and nationalist great powers, means that traditional U.S. approaches to diplomacy in an era of U.S. preeminence must give way to approaches that are more nuanced and patient. This does not mean the United States should step back from decisive leadership but rather that it should exercise that leadership in ways that are less directive and domineering.
6. *The United States must develop strategies for balancing engagement, norm enforcement, and accommodation of other leading powers.* Areas of vulnerability in the order include both rising challenges to its rules and principles and growing resentments on the part of major powers, whose leaders believe that the order is inherently biased against their states. Dealing with both at the same time will demand a very challenging balancing act in which U.S. policy preserves a careful attention to norms while finding avenues of accommodation to enhance the legitimacy of the order in the eyes of other leading powers.

If this analysis is correct, preserving the stabilizing and cooperation-inducing effects of the postwar order requires more than business as usual. It demands a different approach from simply reaffirming the values that have inspired the order and making renewed threats about the U.S. willingness to enforce them. The analysis would seem to point to a two-part agenda for the United States: new strategies for allaying the negative impacts and fears engendered by an integrationist era and a new vision for U.S. leadership of a more shared, and at times less intrusive, order.

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**A**s part of a larger study on the future of the post–World War II liberal international order, RAND researchers analyze the health of the existing order and offer implications for future U.S. policy.

Today's order includes a complex mix of formal global institutions, such as the United Nations and World Trade Organization; bilateral and regional security organizations; and liberal political norms. To evaluate the health of the existing order, the researchers examined several categories of indicators, including both inputs (such as state participation in and attitudes toward order) and outcomes that reflect the order's primary objectives (such as economic liberalization and interdependence, peace among great powers, and adherence to the order's norms).

Across numerous variables, the analysis demonstrates an impressive degree of stability—and, in many cases, steady progress—in the international order since 1945 and especially since the mid-1980s. However, the recent global populist upsurge is placing the popular consensus on key elements of the order in jeopardy. These elements include the desirability of open markets and open borders, the value of multilateral solutions, and the very notion of the rule of law. The study's overall conclusion is that the postwar order continues to enjoy many elements of stability but is increasingly threatened by major geopolitical and domestic socioeconomic trends that are calling into question the order's fundamental assumptions.



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